

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGY OF ENQUIRY

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Introduction

The main concern of this chapter is to present the various sociological theories by which religion and its varied aspects could be studied. And from among these various theories the most appropriate theoretical approach/s used to analyze the present study would be discussed in detail. After the brief examination of the theoretical approaches, the various scientific research methods by which the data for the study have been collected are presented. So, in order to reach the aims of the present study, a detailed plan of work and sequential procedure, and operational definitions of the terms used in the study are also explained briefly. Besides this the tools and techniques and the strategy of enquiry used in the study to find answers to the research questions posed for the study are also presented here.

III. 1. Sociology of Religion

Sociology of Religion is a sub-discipline devoted to the study of the relationship between religion and society. It is fundamental to the sociology of religion that this relationship is a dialectical one: society influences the origins, practices, and doctrines of religion, and religion in turn influences social action. The sociologist of religion abstains from judgments about the truth or falsity of any particular belief. He sees all religions as social products that are created by fundamentally similar processes in all cultures (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974:240).

Sociologists have undertaken three main types of religious study. They have studied religion as a central theoretical problem in understanding of social action. They have studied the relation between religion and other areas of social life, such as economics, politics, and social class. And finally, they have studied religious roles, organizations, and movements (Sills 1968:406-407). The present study is primarily concerned with the relation between religions and the social life of the Kukis, and also

with the Meities and non-Manipuris in general. However, for a clear understanding of the sociology of religion the development of the theory of sociology of religion has been briefly discussed here.

The sociological study of religion has grown out of and remains inextricably related to the much broader effort to understand the phenomenon of religion that has been made by scholars in many fields, especially in the 18th century in the West and more recently in other parts of the world. Two main lines of intellectual development have to be focused to know the historical background of the sociological study of religion i.e. the “rationalist” and the “non-rationalist” traditions. Both traditions have roots deep in the history of Western thought and analogues in the thought of some non-Western cultures. The 18th century saw a certain crystallization of both traditions, which had important consequences for the 19th century. In France and England rationalism in its historicist phase took the form of evolutionism. Comte’s famous theory of the three stages viewed theology as appropriate in the childhood of man; however, it was to be displaced first by philosophy and then by science as men’s rational understanding of the universe gradually increased. Comte interpreted religion to be functional, stressing the contribution of belief and ritual to social solidarity and the control of personal feelings. In England, Spencer developed an evolutionary perspective on religion that was even more narrowly cognitive than Comte’s, and Tylor also undertook an extensive effort to understand the religious development from animism through polytheism to monotheism as a succession of more and more adequate cognitive hypotheses, he remained thoroughly in the rationalist tradition. In the English tradition, Marett’s discussion (1900) of mana and preanimism came very near breaking through the preconceptions of the rationalist utilitarian school (Sills 1968: 407).

Dilthey, who was a follower of Schleiermacher, continued the non-rationalist tradition by stressing the irreducible nature of the religious Weltanschauung and the necessity for an inner understanding (Verstehen) of its particular forms. This tradition led directly into the modern sociological study of religion through the work of Troeltsch and particularly that of Max Weber, who both transcended the tradition in important respects. A certain formal culmination was reached in the work of Rudolph Otto. The sui generis nature of religion and its "geometrical location" in a certain kind of immediate experience has been asserted. Around the turn of the twentieth century several men from both traditions broke free of their preconceptions and converged on a more adequate approach to religion (ibid: 408).

The architects of a more adequate understanding of religion were Durkheim, Weber, and Freud, though others also made important contributions. Weber maintained the idea of the centrality and irreducibility of nonrational elements in human action as it had developed in the German tradition, but he was not content with a mere phenomenological description of these elements. According to Parsons' analysis, Weber began, to place these nonrational elements within the context of a general theory of social action through two of his central concerns. The first was with the problems of meaning-of evil, suffering, death, and the like-which are inescapable in human life but insoluble in purely scientific terms. The second concern links irrational elements to a more general theory of action, was with what he called charisma (ibid: 407-408).

Weber was arguing for the importance of the religion in social action on grounds of its closeness to powerful nonrational motivational forces and its capacity to give form and pattern to those forces, including its capacity to create radically new forms and patterns. According to Durkheim religion is a reality sui generis. By this he meant that religious representations or symbols are not delusions, nor do they simply stand for some

other phenomena, such as natural forces or social morphology. They exist within the minds of individuals so as to inhibit egocentric impulses and to discipline the individual so that he can deal objectively with external reality. These shared representations, with their capacity to direct and control personal motivation, are what make society possible. Weber and Durkheim both placed religion in a theoretical rather than a purely descriptive context, without denying its centrality and irreducibility (ibid: 409).

Freud's early work on the stages of psychosexual development was applied to religion in *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Freud's later ego psychology, heralded in the important essays "group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego" (1912) and "The Ego and the Id" (1923), provided the basis for a much more active understanding of religious symbolism, which could now be treated not merely as reflecting psychic conflict but as actually affecting the outcome of psychic conflict and redirecting psychic forces (International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences 409). A systematic sociology of religion was developed only in the late nineteenth century. Before that time sociologists, influenced by positivism and the antireligious bias of the Enlightenment, were inclined to dismiss religion as a relic from man's primitive and superstitious past (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974:242).

III.2. Western, European, and Indian Contributors

Modern sociologists have been making scientific efforts to understand and explain the non-scientific social phenomenon that consist of beliefs and practices (Rao 1997:455). Lowie's "Primitive Society" (1920), had a major impact on the social organization theory. He coined the term multilinear evolution to indicate that there may have been several developmental sequences in the evolution of social life.

In the field of Sociology of religion, the adherents of the Functionalist school like Durkheim, Radcliffe Brown, Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard attempted to show that religion is functional to social cohesion and solidarity of society (Troisi 1979).

According to Tylor and Frazer religion becomes communal or social only when an idea seen to be valid by one person comes gradually to be shared by others. Human desire to control the power of nature to avoid its hazards and win its favors led the earliest human to the worship of God (Pals 1996).

Karl Marx accepted the view that primitive religion arose from the ignorance of preliterate peoples of natural processes, but he applied his materialistic methods to religion in more economically developed societies. His conclusion was that in any society complex enough to have a stratification system, the dominant religious ideas of the time would merely legitimate the interests of the ruling classes (The idea of the divine right of kings in feudal times or the Protestant stress on thrift, individual effort, and hard work are obvious cases in point). Religion, Marx insisted, derived its form and content from the economic base of society. The criticism of religion was the prime example of man's alienated consciousness (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 240).

Marx made a distinction between the basic structure and super structure of society. In the preface of the *Critique of Political Economy* (1971), Marx mentioned that law, ethical standards, and their literary expositions were relative, in the sense that the social strata to which people belonged conditioned them. Religion too belonged to that sphere. Its role in society was clarified by Marx to be one where under difficult stresses and strains, man turned for solace to religion, which provided the last refuge for the tormented mind. His manner of dealing with a crisis was considered non-rational, a situation where one's creative faculties nearly went under sleep, as if taken over by opium a situation that does no grace to man and his qualities. Marx belonged to the set of writers

who would deny religion the central role for guiding rational human activity. Max Weber considers a particular form of religion to be the driving force of human efforts in the rational organization of economy of a specific type of capitalism (MSOE-003, Book-1, 2006:15-16).

Emile Durkheim, one of the earliest functionalist theorists, was the first sociologist to apply the functional approach to religion in a systematic way. His theory of religion got its proper form in his famous book "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life" (1912).

To Durkheim, religion and society are inseparable and to each other virtually indispensable (Pals 1996). Emphasizing the social meaning of religion, Durkheim sought its origin on the social rather than on the individual psychological or natural level. He proceeded to adopt two criteria which he assumed would coincide—the communal organization of men for the community cult and the dichotomous relation between the sacred and profane (Troisi 1979).

Emile Durkheim's contribution to the sociology of religion has been tremendous and can be said that he laid the foundation of modern sociology of religion. He reasoned that a phenomenon as universal as religion could not simply be dismissed as unworthy of study: it must fulfill some social function of great significance. Like other evolutionists of his time, Durkheim believed that societies could be graded from the simple to the complex and that subsequent changes in the form of religion were elaborations of some universal pristine essence. His conclusion was that sacred things are the symbols of the society that practices the religion; and that religion plays a vital function in society as an integrative force. Religious rites and prohibitions and taboos, to bring people together are reaffirm communal solidarity. Religious forces, Durkheim claimed, are "human forces, moral forces". Every society, in view, needs a religion or a functionally equivalent system

of secular beliefs. Durkheim's insights have been influential not only in the sociology of religion, whose frame of reference has been largely functionalist ever since, but also in general social theory, especially the functionalism elaborated by Talcott Parsons (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 240).

Max Weber's sociology of religion deals with the typological and objective understanding of the subjective meaning of the religious action or inaction by the social actors. In order to make such knowledge of the understanding objective, he founded the methodology of the ideal type and the elective affinity of causal relationships. Weber elaborated a set of categories, such as types of prophecy, the idea of charisma (spiritual power), routinisation, and other categories, which became tools, to deal with the comparative material (Ninian Smart). The goal of Weber's sociology of religion is to understand religious action from the subjective meaning of the actor rationally and also categorically; it is not to establish the laws of religion and society, or to extract the essence of religious action (MSOE-003, Book-1,2006:102-03). Max Weber (1963) devoted considerable attention to the development of sociology of religion. His prime interest was in the influence of ideas on economic development, and his concept of the Protestant ethic provided a critique of Marxist determinism. Weber's studies of world religions were undertaken with the intention of assessing the role that religion, as one of a number of interdependent material and ideological factors, played in accelerating or retarding economic, especially capitalist, development in particular societies. Weber made a number of theoretical contributions to the sociology of religion. Many of his concepts are still employed (sometimes in modified form) today. One was the definition of the prophet as distinct from the priest. Weber also distinguished between religion and magic. Some religions, Weber suggested, are "this worldly", aiming at a mastery of the social

environment (as in Protestantism); others are “otherworldly”, aiming at withdrawal from mundane affairs (as in Buddhism) (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 240).

In the pre-1950 phase the contributions of B. N. Seal, G.S. Ghurye, B. K. Sarkar, R.K. Mukherjee, D.P. Mukherjee, K.P. Chattopadhyay, M. N. Srinivas, N.K. Bose, and D.N. Majumdar are particularly noteworthy. An intensive macro scale study both in time and space would be the path breaking one of Srinivas’ “Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India” (1952). Here he studied the process of sankritization of rituals and behavior which when adopted by a lower group becomes the medium through which the impure connections are given up and the pure ones as defined in the scriptures or by priests adopted, which may ultimately lead to the removal of the stigma associated with the impure, and the group gain some upward mobility (MSOE-003, Book-1, 2006:16). K.P. Chattopadhyay’s studies on “Dharma Puja and Chadak Puja” (1935, 1942), and N.K. Bose’s studies of the “Spring Festival in India” (1927), “Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption” (1941), etc. are some important contributions of the Indian scholars (Jha 2000: 142).

III. 3. Theoretical Approaches

The theoretical paradigms play a significant role in the development of any science. A theory offers a general explanation of social reality and hence it is a higher level abstraction than general laws. In fact laws serve to explain empirical events, which are time and place specific, whereas theories explain laws (Kaplan 1964:346-47). Marxism (historical materialism as a theory), functionalism (both in its organicist and in structuralist-cultural ramifications), systems theory, structuralism and phenomenology at one end and symbolic interactionism, exchange theory, ethno methodology, reference-group and the like at the other end constitute the broad spectrum of sociological theories (Dhanagare 1993:189).

A theory is a set of ideas which claims to explain how something works. A sociological theory is therefore a set of ideas which claims to explain how society or aspects of society work (Haralmbos 1987: 9). Sociological theory can be divided into two broad categories. The first is the macro sociological theory, which is for the study of the society as a whole and the micro sociological theory which studies individuals within the society. In short, sociological theory studies the relationship between individual and the society which are complimentary to each other (MSOE-003 Book-1, 2006).

Explanation and predictions are provided by theories. Theories attempt to answer the why and how question. Theorizing can be defined as the process of providing explanations and predictions of social phenomena, generally by relating the subject of interest to some other phenomena. Theory, as we will use the term here, is first an attempt to explain a particular phenomenon. A statement that does not seek to explain or predict anything is not a theory. Second, the theory must be testable, at least ultimately (Bailey 1982:39-40).

The various theories used by the anthropologists and sociologists to study religion are as follows: Functionalism, Marxism, Conflict theory, Structuralism, Interactionism, and Cultural approaches which include acculturation, diffusion, integration, assimilation, etc.

(i). *Functionalism*

Functionalism is a theoretical approach to sociological analysis based on a view of society as a complex of interdependent institutions, each of which makes some contribution to overall social stability. Functionalist theory tends to focus more on social equilibrium than on social change, and the component elements of a given society are consequently analyzed in terms of their specific function in system maintenance (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974:116).

Functionalism became increasingly influential after World War I, when anthropologists combined it with structuralist approach. After World War II functionalism or structural functionalism, became the dominant school in modern sociology. Functionalist theorists have distinguished between manifest functions, whose usefulness is apparent to members of the society, and latent functions, whose usefulness in maintaining solidarity is forgotten or unrecognized. Functionalist theory is held to obscure the fact that a practice that is functional for some equilibrium may be dysfunctional for some social groups (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974:116). The functionalist perspective focuses on social systems as a whole, how they operate how they change, and the social consequences they produce. Sociological functionalism is closely related to the structural-functionalist approach in anthropology, which tries to explain the various social forms found in tribal societies in terms of their contributions to social cohesion (Johnson 2000: 117 & 118).

The functional theory of religion is basically a sociological theory which has been developed by thinkers such as-William Robertson Smith, Emile Durkheim, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Bronislaw Malinowski, Max Weber, Talcott Parsons, and their followers. This theoretical approach has been used to study society, religion, family, social change, etc. by Robert K. Merton, Talcott Parsons, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Malinowski, Radcliffe Brown and their followers.

Functionalist analysis is primarily concerned with the contribution religion makes to meeting the functional prerequisites or basic needs of society. From this perspective, society requires a certain degree of social solidarity, value consensus, and harmony and integration between its parts. The function of religion is the contribution it makes to meet such functional prerequisites, for example, its contribution to social solidarity (Haralambos 1987:455). Radcliffe Brown has established through functionalism that societies are integrated (Doshi 2002:101).

Functionalists argue that religion is an integrating force in the society, a means of ensuring that people feel that they belong to the society. It gives the people the feeling of having something in common with others in the society. It is a means for the people to express collective beliefs concerning the social commitment and social solidarity. It provides a way for the people to affirm common values, beliefs and ideals. It is collective consciousness. It also serves as the central value system. Thus, for functionalists any social phenomena/institution that serves these functions can be called as religion (Fenn 2003).

According to the functionalists any part of the organism must be seen in terms of the organism as a whole. The various parts of society form a complete system. To understand any part of society, such as the family or religion, the part must be seen in relation to society as a whole (Haralambos 1987: 9).

Functionalism begins with the observation that the human behaviors in a society are structured which means that relationships between members of society are organized in terms of rules. The theory assumes that a certain degree of order and stability are essential for the survival of social systems. Functionalism is therefore concerned with explaining the origin and maintenance of order and stability in society.

Emile Durkheim (1859-1917), the pioneer French Sociologist, is foremost among twentieth century sociologist to have raised the issue of scientific approach to the nature of religion. Religion is found in all societies, primitive, medieval or modern. In primitive societies it is found in its simplest form. Developed societies are complex had religion too acquires complexities of ideas and procedures of worship. The simplest form is the purest he asserts; hence the essence of religion can be studied here. The accounts of the Arunta tribal group of Australia who were illiterate were studied by Durkheim. This tribal group was totemic in the sense that they considered themselves to be related to the

spirits of plants and animals in such a way that they could be recognized by that connection. This study was later translated in English and produced with the title *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915) (MSOE-003, Book-1, 2006:12-13).

Durkheim however, proposed that, religion is the source of all higher culture. Religion has persisted for so long because they meet in one way or the other the most peculiar type of human need. Durkheim defined “religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim 1912). Religion plays an important part in the formation of attitude of the people. However it is not only the higher philosophies of religion which matter in this respect, but the ritualized and stratified complex of highly emotional beliefs and valuations that give the sanction of sacredness, taboo or immutability to inherit institutional arrangement, mode of living and attitudes (Durkheim 1912).

According to Durkheim society is an entity in itself (*sui generis*), which consists of several constituent parts. He was concerned about the social solidarity or cohesion and how a social unit holds its members together. Durkheim stressed the importance of studying social phenomena as they function to maintain the solidarity of social structures (Broce 1973). Durkheim does not connect religion primarily with social inequalities or power, but relates it to the overall nature of the institutions of a society. Durkheim strongly emphasized the fact that religions are never just a matter of belief. All religions involve regular ceremonial and ritual activities, in which a group of believers meet together. In collective ceremonials, a sense of group solidarity is affirmed and heightened. Ceremony and rituals, in Durkheim’s view, are essential to binding the members of groups together. This is why they are found not only in regular situations of worship, but in the various life crises when major social transitions are experienced. In

small traditional cultures, Durkheim argued, almost all aspects of life are permeated by religion. Religious ceremonials both originate new ideas and categories of thought, and reaffirm existing values (Giddens 2001: 537-38). For him the function of religion was to make people willing to put the interests of society ahead of their own desires (MSOE-003 Book-1, 2006: 98).

Bronislaw Malinowski (1948) identified specific areas of social life with which religion is concerned, to which it is addressed. These are situations of emotional stress which threaten social solidarity. Anxiety and tension tend to disrupt social life. Situation which produces these emotions include 'crises of life' such as birth, puberty, marriage and death. Malinowski notes that in all societies these life crises are surrounded with religious ritual. Malinowski's distinctive contribution to the sociology of religion is his argument that religion promotes social solidarity by dealing with situations of emotional stress which threaten the stability of society.

Talcott Parsons (1971) argues that human action is directed and controlled by norms provided by the social system. The norms which direct action are not merely isolated standards for behavior; they are integrated and patterned by the values and beliefs provided by the cultural system. Religion is part of the cultural system. As such religious beliefs provide guidelines for human action and standards against which man's conduct can be evaluated. Parsons sees religion as a mechanism for adjustment to such events and as a means for restoring the normal pattern of life. Parsons argues that religion provides means of adjusting and coming to terms with such situations through rituals which act as 'a tonic to self-confidence'. In this way religion maintains social stability by allaying to the tension and frustration which disrupt social order. The functional perspective emphasizes the positive contributions of religion to society and tends to ignore its dysfunctional aspects.

Indian sociologist like M.N. Srinivas, D.N. Majumdar and G. S. Ghurye initiated and developed the functional perspective. They have all been unidimensional. M.N. Srinivas's studied the society of the Coorgs' from the functionalist perspective, in which he did a holistic study of the caste, clan, religion, etc. Ethnographic studies of various races and cultures in India were the initial contributions of Majumdar. Though he shifted to studies of the town and villages, his thematic concerns remained within the structural-functionalist tradition in social anthropology (Dhanagre 1993:42). Like Tylor's concept of animism, Majumdar's concept of Bongaism with special reference to tribes of Chotanagpur can be understood and explained (Jha 2000:148).

(ii). *Marxism*

Marxism is the revolutionary social-science tradition founded by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Its basic concepts include materialism, alienation, the labor theory of value, class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the revolutionary role of the vanguard party and of national liberation movements (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 167).

Marxism begins with the materialist conception of history. Social institutions are not the product of an inherent human nature or of necessary functional prerequisites of any society. Instead, in acting upon the world through labor, humans transform the world and in the process themselves (ibid: 168). The key to understanding society from a Marxian perspective involves an analysis of the infrastructure. In all historical societies there are basic contradictions between the forces and relations of production and there are fundamental conflicts of interest between the social groups involved in the production process it will thus reflect the interest of the dominant group in the relations of production. Ruling class ideology distorts the true nature of society and serves to legitimate and justify the status quo. The contradictions in the infrastructure will

eventually lead to a disintegration of the system and the creation of a new society (Haralambos 1987:115).

Marxian theory begins with the simple observation that in order to survive, man must produce food and material objects and in doing so he enters into social relationships with other man. Each major step in the development of the forces of production will correspond with a particular form of the social relationship of production. The forces of production and the social relationships of production form the economic base or infrastructure and the other aspects of society called superstructure, are largely shaped by the infrastructure (ibid: 460).

According to Karl Marx, religion is like any other social institution in that it is dependent upon the material and economic realities in a given society. So also religion can only be understood in relation to other social systems and the economic structure of society since it is a creature of productive forces. For him the religious world is but the reflex of the real world. His interpretation of religion thus can be said as functional because he is concerned with the doctrine or the religious beliefs as such (Wilson 1982). In Marx's opinion religion is an illusion that provides reasons and an excuse to keep society functioning just as it is. For him religion is irrational, alienating and hypocritical (Bottomore 1979).

Karl Marx's conception on religion cannot be seen in isolation, it has to be placed in the context of his entire theory of historical materialism and economic determinism. He views religion in terms of its social purpose. For him the primordial factor of analysis of the society is economic. All other aspects are generated from and the manifestations of the economic aspects of the society. Religion is also no different; because for him it is emanated due to the economic necessity of all forms of society. He argued when oppressed people (proletariat) realize social reality, they work towards the

change of the existing system and thereby historical epochs move from one phase to other. The final stage is the socialist communist society which will be a classless society according to Marx. Since there is no question of oppression in a classless society, there is no need of religion too (MSOE-003 Book-1, 2006:85-86).

Among the Indian sociologists, D. P. Mukherjee took up the issue of the dialectic between tradition and modernity. In this analysis he is effectively oriented towards Marxism, but he has turned heavily on the particularistic model of Indian sociology with its emphasis on tradition and history.

(iii). *Max Weber: World Religion and Social Change*

Religion is not necessarily a conservative force; on the contrary, religiously inspired movements have often produced dramatic social transformations. Thus Protestantism-particularly Puritanism-was the source of the capitalistic outlook found in the modern West. Analyzing the eastern religions, Weber concluded that they provided insuperable barriers to the development of industrial capitalism, such as took in the West. This is not because the non-Western civilizations are backward; they have simply accepted values different from those which came to predominate in Europe (Giddens 2001:538). He found that the modern capitalism with its unique features that develop in any other part of the world except there. Also he felt, all circumstances being the same between the West and the non-West, the only factor that was lacking in the non-West is a particular religious ethic (MSOE-003 Book-1, 2006:109).

(iv). *Conflict Theory*

Conflict theory sees social wholes as rife with tension and conflict among their subparts. It mainly emphasizes on: Inequality is the driving force behind conflict; and conflict is the central dynamic of human relations (Turner 1995).

One of the major contributions of conflict theory was the way it laid the ground work for theories more faithful to Marx's work. The basic problem with conflict theory is that it never succeeded in divorcing itself sufficiently from its structural-functional roots. Conflict theory provided an alternative to structural functionalism, but it has been superseded in recent years by a variety of neo-Marxian theories. Conflict theorists are oriented towards the study of social structure and institutions. This theory is more than a series of contentions that are often the direct opposites of functionalist positions. To conflict theorists, every society at every point is subject to processes of change. They see dissension and conflict at every point in the social system. The exponents of conflict theory see many societal elements contributing to disintegration and change.

Conflict theorists argue that religion helps to maintain the position of powerful groups in society at the expense of less powerful groups. This is done through beliefs that offer the lower classes the hope of a better life to come and thus prevent them from focusing on the problem of this world. Max Weber drew a connection between Protestant beliefs and the social order of the early industrial age, noting that the workers class accepted its lot as long as the promise of external happiness was held out (Weber 1958). The most forceful presentation of the conflict view of religion as a tool of class domination comes from Karl Marx. To him, religion masked not psychological fears and anxieties, but the injustice of exploitation in a class system. He believed the capitalist class perpetuated such beliefs as salvation through deference and humility in order to divert the workers from focusing on the economic and political system that caused their suffering. From the conflict point of view, religion is a force for social change. Religious fervor can change a society radically (Smelser 1993:299-300). Dahrendorf and other conflict theorists

recognized that society could not exist without both conflict and consensus, which are prerequisites for each other. In fact, conflict can lead to consensus and integration.

(v). *Cultural Approaches*

Culture consists of the acquired or cultivated behavior and thoughts of individuals within a society, as well as of the intellectual, artistic and social ideals and institutions which the members of the society profess and to which they strive to conform. Culture has dynamism. It grows and this growth is attained by culture processes. Culture processes and culture change go together. Change cannot be brought about by processes. The cultural growth as we have obtained today is through the medium of processes. Growth does not mean that culture gives away its continuity or persistence (Doshi 2002:144). Indian culture undergoes transformation but it maintains its continuity. Hence there is continuity and change. The present study also utilizes some of the major cultural approaches to explain the changes that the Kuki tribes are undergoing since the coming of Christianity, Hinduism, etc. These approaches would help us to know what the people were, what they have been and what they are turning into, and why.

Kroeber has defined culture process as those factors which operate either toward the stabilization and preservation of cultures and their parts or toward growth and change. Changes, in turn, may consist either of increments, such as new developments, inventions and learned traits acquired from outside; or of losses and displacements (1948).

(v). a. *Acculturation*

Acculturation is the processes and results of contact between two or more different cultures. Generally, acculturation brings about considerable diffusion of cultural traits in one or more directions. However, other change-processes also occur, such as development of new customs not found in either culture, the disintegration of older

cultural forms, and reactive withdrawals from contact (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974:1).

According to Kroeber, acculturation comprises those changes produced in a culture by the influence of another culture which result in an increased similarity of the two. The influencing may be reciprocal or overwhelming one way. The resultant assimilation may proceed so far as the extinction of one culture by absorption. In the other, or other factors may intervene to counterbalance the assimilation and keep the cultures separate. The process of acculturation tends to be gradual rather than abrupt (1948).

Tonybee in his dictum expressed that in the process of acculturation and syncretism, the old layers of culture are overlaid but not obliterated. The old religions seldom die but are integrated and overlaid (Singh 1993:33). With a view to understand inductively, certain general principles of acculturation relating to Christianity in tribal areas, the assimilation approach will also be used for the study.

In theory the acculturation process is neutral. It is more or less reciprocal (Doshi 2002: 148). Kroeber in this respect observes: Each group of people is also likely to be developing new peculiarities even while it is taking over culture from others. This is perhaps the most common form of acculturation: across a frontier that remains a frontier, although not a closed one (1948).

The credit for the first field study of acculturation in religion among the tribes goes to S.C. Roy. In his classic monograph-*Oraon Religion and Customs* (1928), Roy analyzed the nativistic and reformist Bhagat movements among the Oraon as a response to the pressures of acculturation. N.K.Bose's important articles-*Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption* (1941) indicates how incorporation of Hindu religious symbols has followed the economic and power gradient from the dominant Hindu peasantry to the tribes (Jha 2000:142).

Acculturation is a social process. It helps to understand social change. Historically, it was started in 1935 by cultural anthropologists. Both historical and empirical facts are obtained through this process (Doshi 2002:148). In Indian anthropology many researches have been done on the principle of acculturation like those of Jan Breman's study of tribals of South Gujarat, S.L. Doshi's study of Bhils, and Beteille's study of Sripuram village to name a few. In this category special mention may be made of S.N. Ratha's study of "*Caste as a Form of Acculturation*" (1977), where the author has attempted to study the process of acculturation through the changing affairs of caste in Indian social system.

(v). b. Diffusion

The intercultural transmission of features of one culture, of linguistic forms, or of social practices is called diffusion (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974:83). Kroeber's approach to diffusion is important for culture has a space, i.e. it has geographical meaning; it has a time cover called chronology and it is different from tradition. If a custom or an idea is handed-over from one generation to another within a society, it is tradition. But if the custom or idea is given to another culture, that is, outside one's own culture, it is diffusion (1948).

Diffusion is a very popular process of social change. It is also defined as external change. When the culture of a society evolves some new inventions, a custom, or a trait and it is passed onto another culture, it is called diffusion. Basically, in culture diffusion, traits of one culture are transferred to another culture. There is inter-societal transformation. Diffusion, therefore, is a process which brings inter-societal change (Doshi 2002:149).

The early pioneers like K.P. Chattopadhyay, N.K. Bose, etc. were the ones who talked about the theory of diffusion in Indian anthropology. Chattopadhyay's studies

on “Dharma Puja and Chadak Puja” (1935, 1942), Das’s paper on “Sun Worship among the Tribes of Eastern India” (1927) and N. K. Bose’s study of the “Spring Festival in India” (1927) referred to about the diffusion of cultural traits in India.

(v). c. Integration

Integration became more relevant when after the Second World War several newly emerged Asian countries began to engage in nation building exercises. The task of nation building could not have been fulfilled without going through the process of integration. Theoretically, culture has a great speciality. In a culture there are different culture traits. These traits maintain their identity and autonomy. But functionally, they contribute to their share to the attainment of the society’s aims and objectives (Doshi 2002:151). According to Herskovits (1955), integration has two approaches: functional and configurational. The functional approach relates to the interrelationship among various elements in a culture. It attempts to study the interrelation between the various elements of a culture. The configurational approach represents the psychological approach to cultural integration, and seeks to discover the thread of aim, of satisfactions that give to the institutional unity the particular quality, the special ‘feel’ that everyone senses when he compares one culture with another.

(v). d. Assimilation

Assimilation is the process by which a distinct racial, cultural, or ethnic group takes on the values of a more dominant group, which is somewhat modified by the values of the entering group. Complete assimilation will consist of intermarriage and adoption of the customs, attitudes, and skills of the dominant group (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974:15). Assimilation is rarely a one way street and the culture of dominant groups is itself affected. With assimilation a dominant group can so effectively impose its culture on subordinate groups that these become virtually indistinguishable from the

dominant culture (Johnson 2000: 65). In assimilation, the people and their culture do not maintain their individual identities (Doshi 2002:152).

Assimilation is a continuous process whereby two distinct groups different from each other in every respect blend into one. Kroeber (1948: 428) stated that 'normally, we may expect assimilation only when the outlook of one society is inclusive and when this society is definitely the stronger and its culture is more advanced'.

Through the process of assimilation, the cultural traits are absorbed by the society to a great extent and in course of time those alien traits become a part and parcel of that society. Acculturation studies have been modified by the realization that there are no 'pure' or contaminated cultures in the world today (Burman 1972). In the areas of religion and languages the effects of interaction are quite substantial, leading to assimilation and to some extent integration of Christianity and Hinduism (Bhardwaj 1977:148).

Different scholars have defined assimilation in different ways. Much relevant definition seems to be the one given by Lunderg in the book 'Sociology'. In it assimilation has been defined as a word used to designate a process of mutual adjustment through which culturally different group gradually obliterate their differences to the point where they are no longer regarded as socially significant or observable. Horton and Hunt also defined assimilation as the process of mutual cultural diffusion through which persons and groups come to share a common culture.

According to Park and Burgess, "assimilation is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memoirs, sentiments, attitudes of other persons or groups and by sharing their experience and history are incorporated with them in a cultural life" (Bhusan 2001: 712).

When the social processes reach a high degree of integration, it takes the form of assimilation. Assimilation is a higher social process of integration. It has been

observed that the process of assimilation is very complex and perfect assimilation seems almost impossible (Doshi 2002: 152-53).

A detail insight of the social and cultural change operating in the tribal societies of India can be understood from K.N. Sahay's studies of the impact of Christianity and Hinduism on the tribes of India (1976, 1980). Studying the impact of Christianity, especially among the Oraons of Chhotanagpur Sahay applied (1976) many cultural processes viz. oscillation, scrutinization, combination, indigenization, retroversion, etc. to explain the phenomena of change in his methodological analysis of Christianity. According to him cultural oscillation refers to—"a sort of fluctuation between two essentially opposed sets of ideals and values belonging to two different traditions" (1976). The process of cultural oscillation is most marked during the initial phase of conversion. The process of cultural scrutinization leads to elimination and retention of tribal traditions by the converts. This process is followed by the process of cultural combination, which is described as "the mixing up or combination of the retained Sarna elements with newly introduced Christian's elements" (Sahay 1976).

According to Sahay cultural indigenization is a specialized type of combination and in context with a specified beliefs or practices. It implies a partial replacement of *Sarna* elements with functionally similar Christian elements. Again, cultural retroversion is described as the—"revaluation of previously eliminated *Sarna* elements and their readoption after necessary modification to suit the changed needs and outlook of the converts" (ibid 1976). Usually this process finds its course when the tribals after conversion have acquired a proper understanding of Christianity and when they are in a position to make their own value judgment (Jha 2000:166).

In the present study what has been attempted to show is that the parts of a society are interrelated and in turn help each other to survive in the long run. After

discussing all the sociological perspectives the most relevant and significant theoretical approaches to be applied in the present study would be the functional and cultural approaches. According to the functionalists, any part of the organism must be seen in terms of the organism as a whole. The various parts of society form a complete system. To understand any part of society, such as the family or religion, the part must be seen in relation to society as a whole. Functionalism is therefore concerned with explaining the origin and maintenance of order and stability in society. Hence, the relationship between the Kuki indigenous religion and their society can be meaningfully understood with the help of functional approach.

The three communities which have inhabited together for such a long period would surely be integrated or acculturate some aspects of culture and customs of the other community. To study the culture of a society, especially a tribal society, we need to know the process of growth the society has passed through. Since culture processes and culture change go together, and change cannot be brought about by processes. We should have an insight to the aspect of cultural changes among the three communities. Hence, assimilation process of the cultural approach theory would be used.

It is very important to stress that sociologists who approach religion as a legitimate area for investigation are similar to the one that determine sociological work on other subject, they are particularly important in the present context because religion involves such profound human passion and aspirations, sociological analysis is, above all a scientific undertaking (Smelser 1970: 334). So the study would be of significance since it would be studied from a sociological perspective.

III. 4. Methodology

For studying society, culture and religion the most reliable and important source of methodology is through fieldwork. Fieldwork methodology is the guiding idiom

of this study. The research study will include both qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting data. Combining both the approaches would mean, applying them wherever they are appropriate for the purpose of the study. Direct and indirect observation, interviews, interview schedules, case-studies are some of the techniques which will be used to make a better interpretation of the data collected.

Field work is the practical work done by a researcher in a specific area of knowledge. The researcher resides in the field and also generates data through the administration of structured schedule and observation. Systematic and scientific fieldwork was pioneered by Radcliffe Brown. Malinowski used the method of fieldwork more thoroughly. He insisted that the social life of a primitive people can only be understood if it is studied intensively (Doshi 2002:82-83). Before undertaking a fullpledged field study, the reasearcher has undertaken a pilot study to finalize the feasibility of the research study. After making all possible required changes the investigator was in the field areas for collecting the data from the Kukis, the Meities and the non-Manipuris, about six months. Collection of the data began from the month of August, 2004 in Senapati district. The investigator had to commute to and fro to the field areas daily. Since the Kuki tribes in this district are distributed in the length and breadth of the district, maximum period i.e. three months, of the data collection was conducted in this district. In the Churachandpur district, the investigator stayed with a Gangte family for forty days and conducted the data collection. As for the Chandel district urban area, the investigator also stayed at Mr. Jugeshwor's residence for one month to interview the Kukis, the Meities and the non-Manipuris. In the rural area of Chandel district, the investigator had to visit the villages daily. But, in the rural areas the Meities and the non-Manipuris werenot found settled together in a village. Hence, only the Kuki groups of respondents were interviewed.

During the collection of data, the investigator kept in mind the basic tenets of fieldwork. Collection of data through the medium of the native's language has been emphasized by Malinowski, Meitilon (Manipuri language) being the lingua franca of all the communities has been the medium for the interview of the present study. The Kuki tribes also have good knowledge of the Meitilon. In few cases where the subject was an old person who had no knowledge of the Meitilon help from the host was taken to interpret.

The rituals and technical activities of ritual which are said to be no more in practice among the Kukis was made to demonstrate by some well versed respondents by making miniature figures. Comments and respondents' personal experiences regarding certain issues have been noted down in the field diary. Most of the observations of the researcher related to the material culture, dress code, general environment, sanitary conditions, etc. were also noted down in the field diary.

A quantitative research employs quantitative measurement and the use of statistical analysis. This type of research is based on the methodological principles of positivism and adheres to the standards of strict sampling and research design (Ahuja 2001: 40). A variable is quantitative if observations can be characterized in numerical terms. Income, wealth, age, fertility gross national product, religious services attended each year, and group size are all examples of quantitative variables (Johnson 2000: 221). Quantitative research methods have been applied in the present study wherever the answers can be characterized numerically and statistically.

Qualitative research describes reality as experienced by the groups, communities, individuals, etc. A variable is qualitative if the observations cannot be described meaningfully in terms of numbers. Qualitative research method has been used in the study for interpreting the research questions. This method helps in analyzing the data

and brings out the various differences in the traditional and present society, the transition period, differences and similarities of the groups and within the group, the contribution of the various aspects of the society, etc.

In the comparative research, the similarities and the differences between different units or cultural or social groups are studied. In the present study this method has been used to make a comparison between the Kuki tribes, the Meities and the non-Manipuris with regard to the role of man and woman in ritual practices, status of women, acculturation between the groups and the role Christianity has played in their particular society.

Gardner has defined interview as “a two person conversation, initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on the content specified by the research objectives of description and explanation” (1968: 527). Interviews are one of the most widely used methods of gathering data. A face to face situation in which a respondent is asked questions designed to obtain information central to the aims of the research scientist (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 144). An interview guide is a list of points or topics which an interviewer must cover during the interview. In this case considerable flexibility may be allowed as to the manner, order, and language in which the interviewer asks the questions.

Interview is verbal questioning. As a research tool or as a method of data collection, interview is different from general interviewing with regard to its preparation, construction and execution. This difference is that: research interview is prepared and executed in a systematic way, it is controlled by the researcher to avoid any distortion, and it is related to a specific research question and a specific purpose. In the research interview, thus, the interviewer asks specific questions pertaining to research objectives/criteria and the respondents restrict his answers to specific questions posed by

the interviewer (Ahuja 2001: 221). Its objective is to exchange ideas, elicit information regarding a wide area in which the interviewee may wish to collect the past, interpret the present and advocate his future course of action or plan (Rao 1997: 737).

Since the target population of the study was selected by random sampling wherein literate and illiterate persons would be included, the investigator realized that interview technique would be the most appropriate tool for obtaining the needed research data. For this the investigator prepared a structured interview or an interview schedule for collection of the data for the present study.

The set of structured questions in which answers are recorded by the interviewer himself is called the interview schedule (Ahuja 2001: 194). Schedule is the name usually applied to a set of questions which are asked and filled in by an interviewer in a face to face situation with another person. The two forms obviously have much in common, particularly; the fact that in both cases the wording of the question is the same for all respondents. In a structured interview the researcher has a checklist of questions and puts them to the respondents in exactly the same form and exactly the same order (Rao 1997:741).

Interview schedule was used for the collection of the data from the respondents of the three districts. The key informants were male and female of different age groups from three districts of rural and urban areas regardless of their differences in educational level and the socio-economic status. Respondents were interviewed in Manipuri to maintain consistency while interviewing. Through this process an insight into their socio-cultural-religious practices, attachments towards their culture and beliefs of the respondents could be studied.

The interview schedule was asked directly to the respondents and side by side fills up the schedule by the investigator herself. To conduct the interview schedule,

the investigator visited the villages and went to the houses of the respondents. Some villagers who were approached for the interview could not give their precious time, for it was the harvesting season, so they very politely denied the request. Cold responses were also not unexpected, though, from some of them. Some respondents with whom the interview was not able to finish in a day had to be interviewed again by taking time from their work. In total interview schedules have been used for collecting the data from three hundred respondents. Out of the three hundred, two hundred and ninety five interview schedules were administered by the investigator herself. And five interview schedules were handed over for responses to an IAS officer (Retired), two lecturers, and two teachers who all belonged to the Kuki tribes.

Questionnaire is a printed research instrument presented to the person from whom data are sought. This may include items in which the respondent is asked to choose one of two or three different statements as coming closest to his or her opinion or beliefs, and open-ended questions in which he or she provides one-word or short-answer responses (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 233). The questionnaire and schedule employ mainly structured items while the interview guide uses a greater proportion of unstructured or "open-ended" question (Goode & Hatte 1952).

In few cases the interview schedule was handed over to the respondents as a questionnaire. Questionnaire schedule was used only for the above mentioned five respondents of the whole sample. The reasons for using the questionnaire only for these five respondents are that they were all highly educated so did not have any problem with the language of the schedule and also they could not give time for the interview.

Observation is the procedure by which a scientist gathers his/her data. Observation is the way in which one undertakes to measure a phenomenon. It may be direct, where one actually observes the behavior of individuals, or indirect, as through the

use of questionnaires, interviews, and projective techniques or physiological reactions (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974:199). Observation is one of the principal techniques of research in social sciences (Rao 1997:724). Observation is the basic method of getting information about the world around us. It is the most pervasive activities of daily life and a primary tool for scientific inquiry. Observation becomes a scientific technique to the extent that it i) serves a formulated research purpose, ii) is planned systematically, iii) is recorded systematically and related to more general propositions rather than being presented as a set of interesting curiosities and, iv) is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability (Jahoda et al. 1955).

Observation may take many forms and is at once the most primitive and the most modern form of research techniques. It includes the most casual uncontrolled experiences as well as the most exact film records of laboratory experimentation. Observation is a systematic, direct, definite and deliberate examination of the spontaneous occurrence at the time of their occurrence (Rao 1997:724-725). Observation is a method that employs vision as its main means of data collection. It has also been defined as “a planned methodical watching that involves constraints to improve accuracy” (Goode & Hatt 1952: 119).

Observation technique has been used to get an insight of the Christmas festival among the Kuki tribes. The researcher stayed in one of the houses of a Gangte tribe for about a month (December 2004) in order to collect data from Churachandpur district. There is a small family with Mr. Lamkhodem Gangte, Mrs. Hoinu Gangte, and their adopted daughter. While staying with them, the researcher took part in their daily routine as a member of the family and observed their various activities, festivals, interaction with their friends and relatives, etc.

Participant observation is a technique by which an investigator attempts to verify his hypotheses through direct participation in an observation of the community, tribe, or other social grouping being studied. This approach is unstructured and direct, and often only a few of the members of the group under study serve as informants in interviews, whereas the others are simply observed (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 204). Participant observation is a method in which the investigator becomes a part of the situation he is studying, and it is more used in anthropological research (Ahuja 2001: 245)

Non-participant observation is the technique where the observer remains detached and does not participate or intervene in the activities of those who are being observed. But merely observes their behavior. Non-participant observation is more used in sociological research. In India, Srinivas had used this method in studying the process of 'Sanskritization' in Mysore and Andre Beteille in Tanjore Village (Ahuja 2001: 239-46). The researcher used this technique to observe their festivals, rituals, church services, tribal dances, material culture, etc.

Unstructured Observation is done without having predetermined what questions will be asked or into what categories behaviors will be coded (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974:300). The technique of unstructured observation has been contributed mainly by social anthropology, where it has frequently taken the form of participant observation. In this form of observation the observer takes on, to some extent at least, the role of a member of the group and participates in the functioning (Ritzer 1952). Unstructured observation is loosely organized and the process is largely to the observer to define. The observer cannot be more intimately involved, but he or she can actually experience the world in a manner similar to those being observed. This technique has also become quite handy for the researcher while collecting data.

Structured observation is a procedure in which the scientist decides in advance the questions he will ask the respondents and the categories into which the observed behavior would be coded, as well as when and where he will make the observations (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 288). Structured observation is used mainly in studies stating with relatively specific formulations (Goode & Hatte 1952). Structured observation is organized and planned which employs formal procedure, has a set of well defined observation categories, and is subjected to high level of controls and differentiation. Using this technique, the researcher tried to collect data related to their material culture, religious aspects, etc.

Case study method is the intensive observation of only one or, more typically a few, persons, instances, communities, or social organizations (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 34). The success of a case study depends heavily on the open mindedness, sensitivity, insights and integrative abilities of the investigator. Case study is an intensive study of a case which may be an individual, an institution, a system, a community, an organization, an event, or even the entire culture. It is a kind of research design which involves the qualitative method of selecting the sources of data and presents the holistic account that offers insights into the case under study. It is not a method of data collection; rather a research strategy or an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon by using multiple sources of evidence. Case study can be simple and specific or complex and abstract (Ahuja 2001: 261).

Yin (1991:23) has defined case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used”. Mitchelle (1983:192) has also maintained that a case study is not just a narrative account of an event or a series of events but it involves analysis against an appropriate

theoretical framework or in support of theoretical conclusions. The case study technique is not a specific one. It is a way of organizing social data so as to preserve the unitary character of the social object unit as a whole. This means of approach includes the development of that unit, which may be a person, a family or other social group, a set of relationships or processes or even an entire culture.

Case study has been thought of as a kind of qualitative analysis. It is through the developments of qualitative techniques, such as qualitative coding, that the case study can be efficiently used in social research. References in the sociological literature to "the case study method" are decreasing (Goode & Hatte 1952). But this form of qualitative analysis has been applied for the present study so as to know the history, personal experiences of the individual and to know their views regarding the present situation.

From the rural and urban settings of the three districts ten subjects from the Kuki respondents were chosen for case studies. Among these ten subjects chosen for the case study method are three old males- a non-convert, a Judaist, and a converted Christian, who are all from rural areas, and a widow from an urban area; three middle aged males-a thiempu who got converted to Christianity, an educated Christian believer, an educated man, who has knowledge about the traditional practices, from an urban area, and a woman; and two young aged persons-a girl who is a graduate and a man who is a teacher. These subjects were chosen as they had special knowledge and information about their traditional religious rituals, about the impact of the transition from traditional to modern community.

It is often thought of as a kind of initiative approach, derived from much participant observation and using all sorts of personal documents such as diaries, letters, autobiographies, etc. without adequate sampling designs or checks on bias or distortions resulting from personal views of social reality. From all the above methods of research only the feasible and most appropriate ones have been used for the present study. For the present

study ten case studies have been done. Five case studies from Senapati district, three from Chandel district and two from Churachandpur district. Since Senapati district had more Thadous, which is a major group of the Kuki tribe, more case studies have been done from the district. Four case studies of the old age respondents have been done so as to get a clear view about the past and the present practices and beliefs of the Kuki tribes. Three from the middle age group which will give a picture of the transition from the tradition to the present society, and two from the young age group which are said to be born Christians to see the level of knowledge about their traditional society.

III. 5. Research Design

The designing or process of research is concerned with making controlled scientific inquiry. The term 'design' means "drawing an outline" or planning or arranging in details. Research design is planning a strategy of conducting research. Research design is a detailed plan of how the goals of research will be achieved. According to Henry Manheim (1977:140) research design not only anticipates and specifies the seemingly countless decisions connected with carrying out data collection, processing and analysis but it presents a logical basis for these decisions. William Zikmund has described research design as "a master plan specifying the methods and procedure for collecting and analyzing the needed information" (1988: 41). Martin Bulmer said "research design is the specification of the problem, conceptual definitions, derivation of hypotheses to test and defining of population to be studied" (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 86).

The investigator tends to conduct this research in order to answer certain specific, straightforward queries regarding the Kukis' indigenous religion and impact of established religions on their culture and society.

III. 5. i. Operational Definitions

Operationalization is precisely defining what is meant by the concept. This may include breaking it down into sub-concepts, termed components or establishing concretely measurable characteristics or indicators of the concept. Thus operationalizing the concept(s) means how the concept is to be used in the research and how it is to be measured (Ahuja 2001:113-114).

III. 5. i. a. Religion

Religion is a mode of action, as well as a system of belief, and a sociological phenomena as well as a personal experience (Malinowski 1948:24).

III. 5.i. b. Tribe

A tribe is generally described as a group of people characterized by a common and distinct name, a group sentiment, and a common and specific territory.

III. 5. i. c. Kuki Tribe

The Kukis are also called Khongjais or Zomi (Zo = cold region; mi = man). Under the Kuki tribes various sub-tribes are included. But only those tribes with a significant population would be studied viz. Thadou, Zou, Vaiphei, Hmar, Paite, Kom, Ralte, Gangte, Simte, etc. The term Kuki has been discarded by these particular sub-tribes for the word Kuki was given by outsiders and does not have any specific meaning. But, since this word has been used by the Constitution of India to denote these sub-tribes under one group, 'Kuki tribes' has been used in the study.

III. 5. ii. Sample

A sample is any subset of a population selected to represent and draw inferences about that population. As a research technique, sampling first came into use in agricultural studies as a way to estimate crop. Today sampling techniques are used widely in the social sciences to gather information on large, complex populations without the

expense of conducting a Census (Johnson 2000: 240). According to Manheim (1977: 270), “a sample is a part of the population which is studied in order to make inference about the whole population”.

A sample is a portion of people drawn from a large population. It will be representative of the population only if it has same basic characteristics of the population from which it is drawn (Singleton & Straits 1999). A sample is a smaller representation of a large whole. The use of sampling allows for more adequate scientific work by making the time of the scientific worker count is an essential part of all scientific procedure. A sample must be representative and adequate (Goode & Hatt 1952).

There are two different types of sampling: Probability and Non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is one that can specify for each element of the population the probability that it will be included in the sample. And it is the only approach that makes possible representative sampling plans. Probability sampling is one in which every unit of the population has an equal probability of being selected for the sample. It offers a high degree of representativeness. However, this method is expensive, time consuming and relatively complicated since it requires a large sample size and the units scattered are usually widely scattered. There are six forms of probability sampling- simple random, stratified random, systematic (or interval), cluster, multi-stage and multiphase. In non-probability sampling, there is no way of estimating the probability that each element has been included in the sample, and no assurance that every element has some chance of being included. Major forms of non-probability samples are: accidental samples, quota samples and purposive samples. Non-probability sampling makes no claim for representativeness, as every unit does not get the chance of being selected. It is the researcher who decides which sample units should be chosen (Ahuja 2001: 166).

Simple random sampling design is used for sampling the subjects. Simple random sampling gives each element in the population an equal chance of being included in the sample. For this study the research sample consist of three hundred households of both rural and urban population of Kuki tribes, Meities, non-Manipuris and converted Christians of Churachandpur, Chandel and Senapati districts of Manipur, giving more or less emphasis to both males and females of different age groups. The Kuki tribes are the Thadou, Zou, Vaiphei, Gangte, Hmar, Kom, Paite, Ralte and Simte; the Meites are the valley people who speak a different language and the non-Manipuris are the Nepalese, Biharis who have settled down or came to work, the Punjabis who has been in Manipur since their forefather's time, the Muslims of Manipur and the South Indians who either came from Myanmar or from the Southern states of India. Majority of the sample for the study are the Kuki tribes with one hundred and eighty subjects both male and female of different age groups since the main objective of the study is about their religious beliefs and practices. To complement the study with the acculturation and assimilation process of the Kuki tribes with the Meities and the non-Manipuris, a sample of sixty subjects each from the Meities and the non-Manipuris have also been taken. The following flow-chart (Fig.III.1), and Table III.1 represent the whole sample of the study.

Fig. III. 1 Flow-chart of the total sample

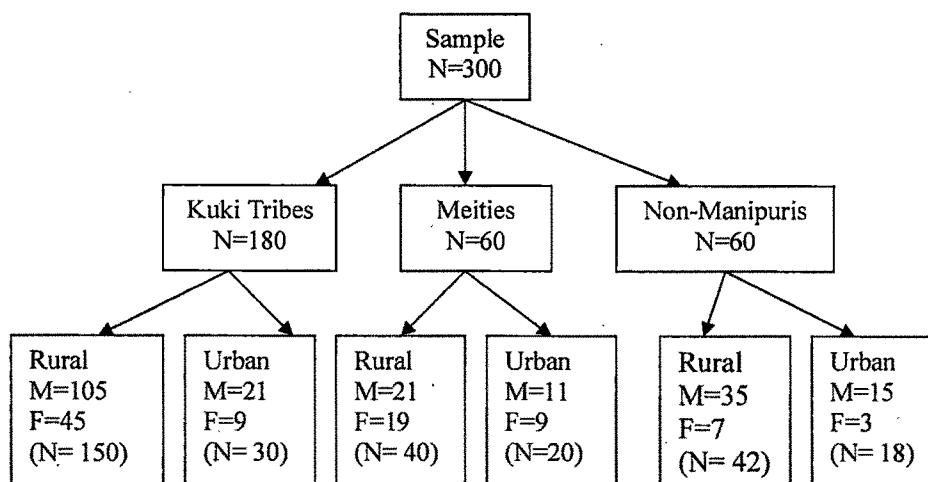


Table III.1

General sample of the three districts

Name of the groups	Rural	Urban	Young Age		Middle Age		Old Age		Total
			M	F	M	F	M	F	
Thadou	54	22	2	3	29	8	28	6	76
Zou	19	2	3		8	3	5	2	21
Vaiphei	12	6	1	1	9	4	3		18
Paite	12		1	2	2	2	4	1	12
Kom	12				4	3	3	2	12
Gangte	12		1		3	2	4	2	12
Hmar	10				3	3	3	1	10
Ralte	10			1	4	2	2	1	10
Simte	9				2	5	2		9
Meitei	40	20	3	4	18	19	10	6	60
Non-Manipuri	42	18	5	1	37	6	9	2	60
Total	232	68	16	12	119	57	73	23	300

III. 5. iii. Selection of Districts

Only three districts, i.e. Churachandpur, Chandel and Senapati, have been selected for the present study based upon the highest percentage of tribal population among the nine districts of Manipur. These three districts of the state were purposively

chosen for the present study since the sample of the study i.e. Kuki tribes, predominantly inhabited in these areas along with the Meities and the non-Manipuri population. The main reason for selecting these three districts was to get a clear picture of the acculturation among the three groups which have co-existed since time immemorial. Then the rural and urban areas have also been divided so as to see certain differences between these three groups regarding the issues taken up for the study. But only Chandel district has an urban area so only thirty subjects of Kuki tribes were interviewed from here. Twenty Meitie and eighteen non-Manipuri sample of the Chandel district has also been interviewed from the urban area because no rural areas were found where the three communities inhabited together in a village or nearby to each other. Only two non-Manipuri subjects could be found in Machi village. They got married to Kuki women so they have settled among the Kukis.

The sample for the study is a total of 300 households from the three districts of Manipur i.e. Churachandpur, Senapati and Chandel represented in Tables III.2, 3, and 4 respectively. From each district 100 households have been studied using simple random sampling. An attempt has been made to make a comparative study between the urban and rural areas, but since Churachandpur and Senapati districts has no specified urban areas, the study has been conducted only in rural areas. As for the Chandel district, which has both rural and urban areas, the Kuki subjects have been selected from both the settings. But, the Meitie and non-Manipuri subjects have been selected mainly from urban area only. Only two non-Manipuri subjects could be found settling among the Kukis. Even those Meitie and non-Manipuri neighbors to the Kuki villages came under the Thoubal jurisdiction. And the Meitie and the non-Manipuris do not settle usually in the interior hills. The sample was categorized into three age-groups of young age i.e. who were between the age group of 12-24, middle age i.e. 25-55 years, and old age i.e. 56 years and

above of both males and females. The subjects of the study have been chosen from the three different age groups so as to see the differences in their viewpoints, attitudes towards the tribes' culture, and the modernizing society and religion.

Table III. 2
Churachandpur District Sample

Name of the groups	Churachandpur District						Total
	Young Age		Middle age		Old Age		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Thadou							
Zou			3		2	2	07
Vaiphei		1	2	1	1		05
Paite	1	2	1	1	3	1	09
Kom							
Gangte		1	3	2	3	2	10
Hmar			3	3	3	1	10
Ralte	1		4	2	2	1	10
Simte			2	5	2		09
Meitei	1		7	5	4	3	20
Non-Manipuri		1	13	1	5		20
Total	3	5	37	20	25	10	100

Table III.3
Senapati District Sample

Name of the groups	Senapati District						Total
	Young Age		Middle age		Old Age		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Thadou	2	2	15	3	19	2	43
Zou							
Vaiphei			3	1			04
Paite			1				01
Kom			4	3	3	2	12
Gangte							
Hmar							
Ralte							
Simte							
Meitei	1		4	9	4	2	20
Non-Manipuri			14	3	1	2	20
Total	3	2	41	19	27	8	100

Table III.4

Chandel District Sample

Name of the groups	Rural						Urban						Total
	Young Age		Middle age		Old Age		Young Age		Middle age		Old Age		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Thadou			4	2	4	1		1	10	3	5	3	33
Zou	3		3	3	3				2				14
Vaiphei			2		1		1		2	2	1		09
Paite				1	1								02
Kom													0
Gangte			1		1								02
Hmar													0
Ralte													0
Simte													0
Meitei							1	4	8	5	2		20
Non-Manipuri			1		1		5		8	3	2		20
Total	3		11	6	11	1	7	5	30	13	10	3	100

In order to present the whole sample in a proper perspective profiles related to their family structure, occupation, income and education are given below (Table III-5, 6, 7, 8).

Table III.5
Family Structure of the Respondents

Name of the groups	Nuclear family	Joint family	Extended family	Total
Thadou	44	28	04	76
Zou	17	04		21
Vaiphei	09	09		18
Paite	08	04		12
Kom	09	03		12
Gangte	11	01		12
Hmar	09	01		10
Ralte	05	05		10
Simte	06	03		09
Meitei	48	10	02	60
Non-Manipuri	41	12	07	60
Total	207	80	13	300

Table III.6

Occupational Profile of the Respondents

Name of the groups	Service		Agricultural Labor		Farmer		Business		Any other		Not working		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Thadou	25	4			13	6	7	1	12	5	2	1	76
Zou	7				2	2	2	1	4		1	2	21
Vaiphei	5	1				1	2		4	3	2		18
Paite	4	2			2	1			1	2			12
Kom					2	3	2		3	2			12
Gangte	5	2			1	1		1	2				12
Hmar	3					1			3	3			10
Ralte	4	2				2	2						10
Simte	2	2				1				1	2	1	9
Meitei	7	4			2		14	14	8	7	1	3	60
Non-Manipuri	4				4		35	7	6	2	1	1	60
Total	66	17			26	18	64	24	43	25	9	8	300

Table III.7

Economic Profile of the Respondents

Name of the groups	Lower Income Group (LIG) (10,000-24,000)	Middle Income Group (MIG) 24,001-below 1 lakh	High Income Group (HIG) 1 lakh & above	Nil	Total
Thadou	23	45	01	07	76
Zou	06	09	03	03	21
Vaiphei	07	06	01	04	18
Paite	04	07	00	01	12
Kom	06	05	01	00	12
Gangte	04	07	01	00	12
Hmar	08	01	01	00	10
Ralte	02	05	03	00	10
Simte	01	05	00	03	09
Meitei	23	28	03	06	60
Non-Manipuri	23	30	02	05	60
Total	107	148	16	29	300

Table III.7 shows that the group of respondents, falling under the category of lower income group is also quite significant i.e. 35.67%. Since most of the respondents are not highly educated and are settled in the rural areas, their means of earning is limited.

Majority of the non-Manipuri respondents are daily wage earners, hence the lower income group of respondents are more. 49.33% of the respondents come under the middle income group as most of them are salaried class. 5.33% of them are in the higher income group for they were the only highly educated respondents of the study. 9.67% come under the no income group of respondents for they were the old aged respondents who could work for an earning and depended on the other family members.

Table III.8

Educational Profile of the Respondents

Name of the groups	Illiterate		Primary		Secondary		Higher Secondary		College		University		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Thadou	14	6	18	4	16	2	2	1	6	4	3		76
Zou	4	5	2		4		1		5				21
Vaiphei	3	1	2	2	4	1	1		2	1	1		18
Paite	3	1	1	1	2	2				1	1		12
Kom			5	3	1	2	1						12
Gangte	1	1	1		1	1	2		2	2	1		12
Hmar	1	1	1	1		1	1		2	1	1		10
Ralte			2		1	1		2	3	1			10
Simte		2	2	1	1			1	1			1	9
Meitei	8	10	5	6	6	6	4	4	6	2	3		60
Non-Manipuri	7	3	14	7	15		6		6		2		60
Total	41	30	53	25	51	16	18	8	33	12	12	1	300

The above table shows that the 23.67% of the total respondents are illiterate. This group of respondents mainly belongs to the old aged respondents of the rural areas. 26% of the total respondents belonging to the old aged and middle aged groups of all the communities, mainly the Kuki respondents are school dropouts after IVth or Vth standards. Another 22.33% of them are educated upto secondary, 8.67% of the respondents are higher secondary school passed, 15% of them are graduates and 4.33% of them have the highest degrees.

III. 6. Strategy of Enquiry and Analysis of Data

The foregoing portrait of the approaches of the founding fathers of Sociology of religion carries within it an implicit frame laden with insights and leads for further inquiry in the domain. However, it should be obvious that there can be no question of applying Emile Durkheim or B. Malinowski without giving ample significance to the shift in the approach to Religion. And, at the same time there can be no question of applying Clifford Greetz or Evans-Pritchard without considering that religion is a functional part of society.

Thus, in order to understand the religious aspects of the indigenous Kuki religion, it is obvious to consider functional-structural and socially integrative approach mastered by Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski.

However, this approach alone cannot explain the transformation of an indigenous religion into a modern/alien religion i.e. Christianity. In order to analyze the impact of Christianity on the native indigenous Kuki religion and the relation between Kukis, caste Hindu Meities and non-Manipuris cultural approach is adopted. Thus, an attempt has been made to study the mutual adaption between the Kuki religion of Manipur and Christianity through acculturation process. In order to study the indigenous religion on one hand and the present status of the religion on the other hand the researcher followed certain basic guidelines for the analysis of data.

- (i) While disclosing the dialectical linkage of religion and society, 'religion' must not be reduced to something other than itself, nor eliminated altogether.
- (ii) It is important to delineate the elements of religion which also characterized the religion of Kuki tribes.
- (iii) Each and every element of indigenous tribal religion was considered, described and the responses of the respondents are quantified and qualified.

- (iv) With the backdrop of the knowledge of the respondents regarding native religion, the present states of affairs of the Kuki converts are described.
- (v) A detailed account of culture change through acculturation is considered significant in the glaring impact of Christianity.
- (vi) The interrelationship between the Kukis, caste Hindu Meities and non-Manipuris invariably manifest the impact of culture exchange. Hence, the impact of one culture upon the other is worth deliberated.
- (vii) Theories of religion and of society are necessarily secondary in this perspective. But the data is allowed to 'speak' for itself as far as possible.
- (viii) All interpretations and formulations, based on the resources and guidelines are necessarily tentative and exploratory.
- (ix) Finally, one may come to certain operational conclusions on the debate of preserving the cultural heritage or ethnic identity of the tribes in the face of the onslaught of organized religions.

III. 7. Objectives of the Study

I. Religious Practices of Kukis:

To study the indigenous religion of the Kuki tribes in the three districts of Manipur; to study the impact of religion on social life of the Kuki; to study the religious beliefs and practices regarding supernatural beings and agencies concerning man; to examine the magical beliefs and practices; to survey the elements of religion - rituals, beliefs, symbols and myths, taboos, totems and arousing feelings; to understand the forms of rituals and ritual language; to study the nature of people's belief concerning life cycle from birth to death; to study about witchcraft and sorcery.

II. Impact of Acculturation:

To examine the variations in the changing values and modes of life due to culture contacts among both Kuki tribes and caste Hindus.

III. Role of Social Structure on Religious Practices:

To study the role of women in the ritual process as practitioners and as priestesses; to compare the priest and priestess of the Kuki and caste Hindus; to study the rules regarding marriage, divorce, rites-de-passage; to understand the clan and caste stratification; to compare the harvest and planting rites.

IV. Role of Christianity:

It is proposed to find out the various sects within Christianity and preferences to convert into one or other types; to examine the impact of Christianity on native religion; to understand why there is an impact of Christianity but not Buddhism; does Christianity help them to achieve professionally?; to examine the links with Myanmar and China; to investigate the impact of globalization.

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