

**TRADITIONAL RELIGION OF THE LOTHANAGAS AND  
THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY.**

A Thesis

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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### **Certificate**

Certified that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by Ms. Mhabeni Ezung and the contents of this thesis did not form a basis of the award of any previous degree to her, or, to the best of my knowledge, to anyone else, and that the thesis had not been submitted by her for any research degree in any other university.

In habit and character, Ms. Mhabeni Ezung is a fit and proper person for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## **Declaration**

I, Mhabeni Ezung, do hereby declare that the thesis entitled “**Traditional Religion of the Lotha Nagas and the Impact of Christianity**” submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree on the same title

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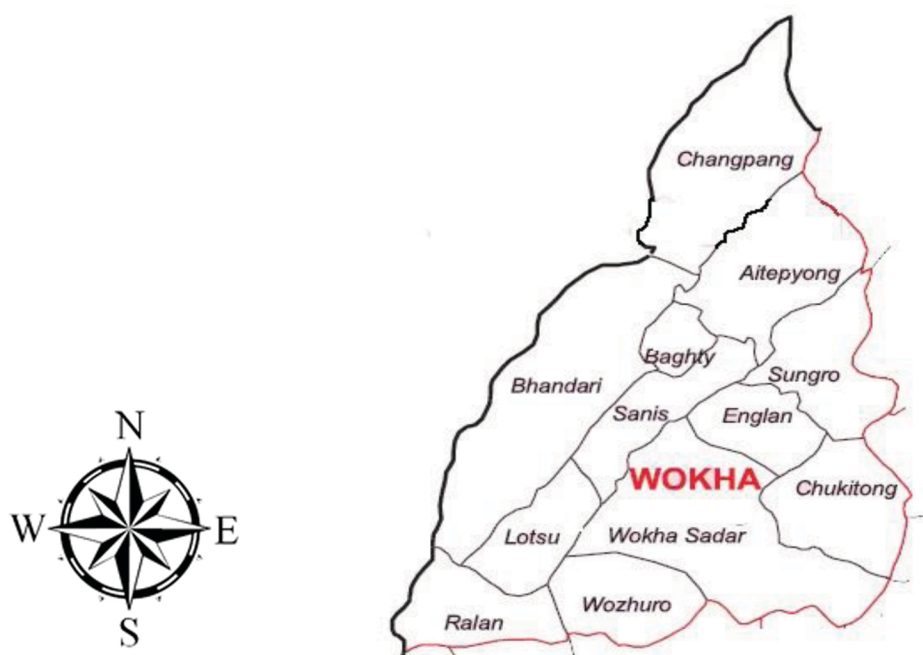
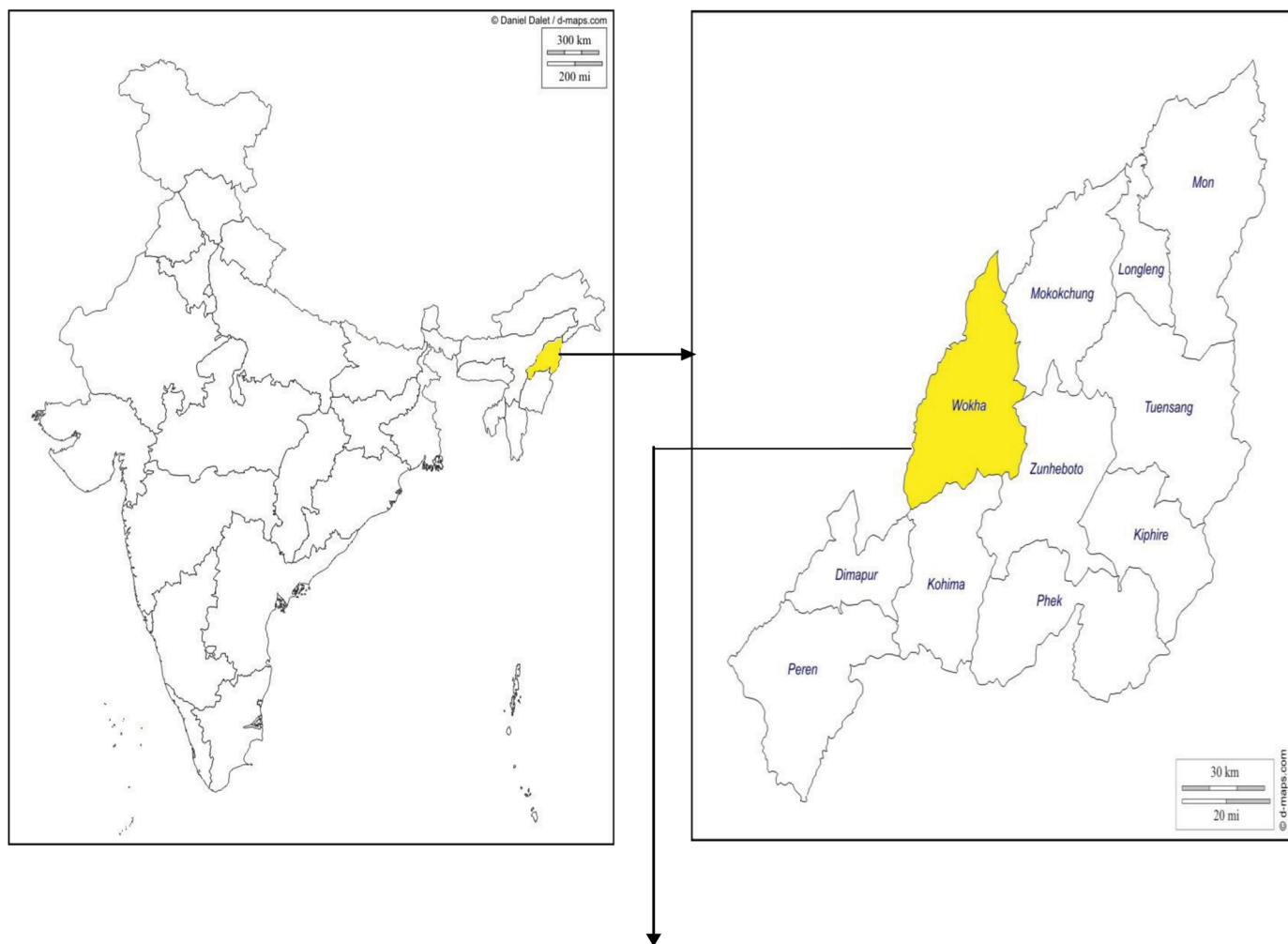
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Date:

**Ms.Mhabeni Ezung**

## Area of Study in Yellow Shade



Map Not in Scale



Plate-1: *Menkitong* (Head Tree of the Village) on which Heads of enemies were hung during Headhunting Days.



Pyotchu Village, Lower Range, Wokha.



Longsa Village, Upper Range, Wokha.



Plate-2: *Ozu* (Monoliths) erected by the *Ekhyo Ekhung*( rich men) after performing the *Osho* (Feast of Merit)



Pyotchu Village, Lower Range, Wokha.



Yikhum Village, Wokha.



Plate-3: *Oha* (Luck Stones) belived by the Lothas to bring fortune to the Village and were kept at the foot of the posts of *Chumpo* (Bachelor's Dormitory), under the *Menkitong* (Head Tree) or by individuals in their houses or granaries.



Kept by Thungdamo Ezung, Animist, Longsa Village, Wokha.



Plate-4: Epitaph of Lt. Shanjamö Jungi, a pioneer Christian Missionary among the Lothas.



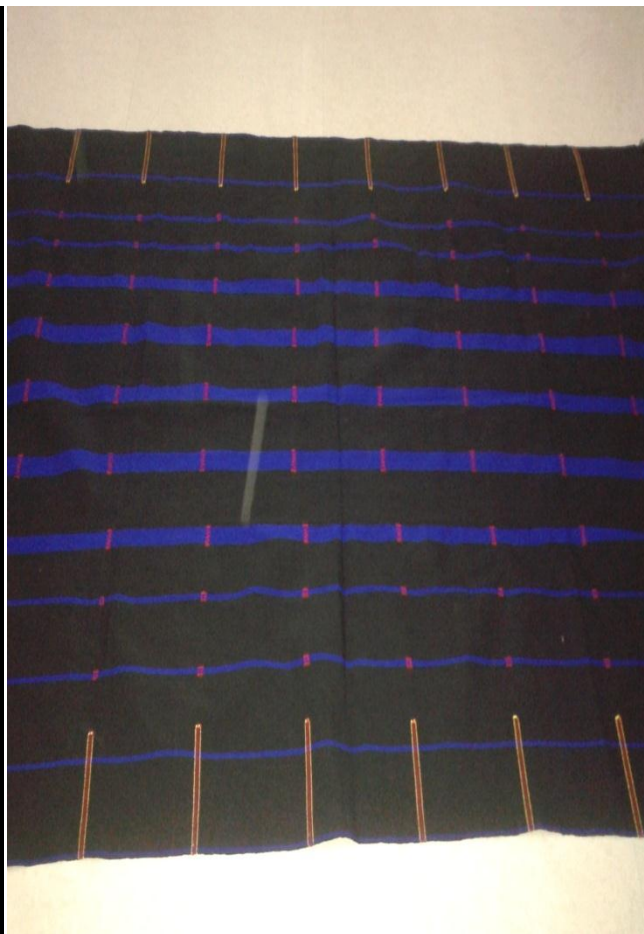
Yikhum Village, Wokha.



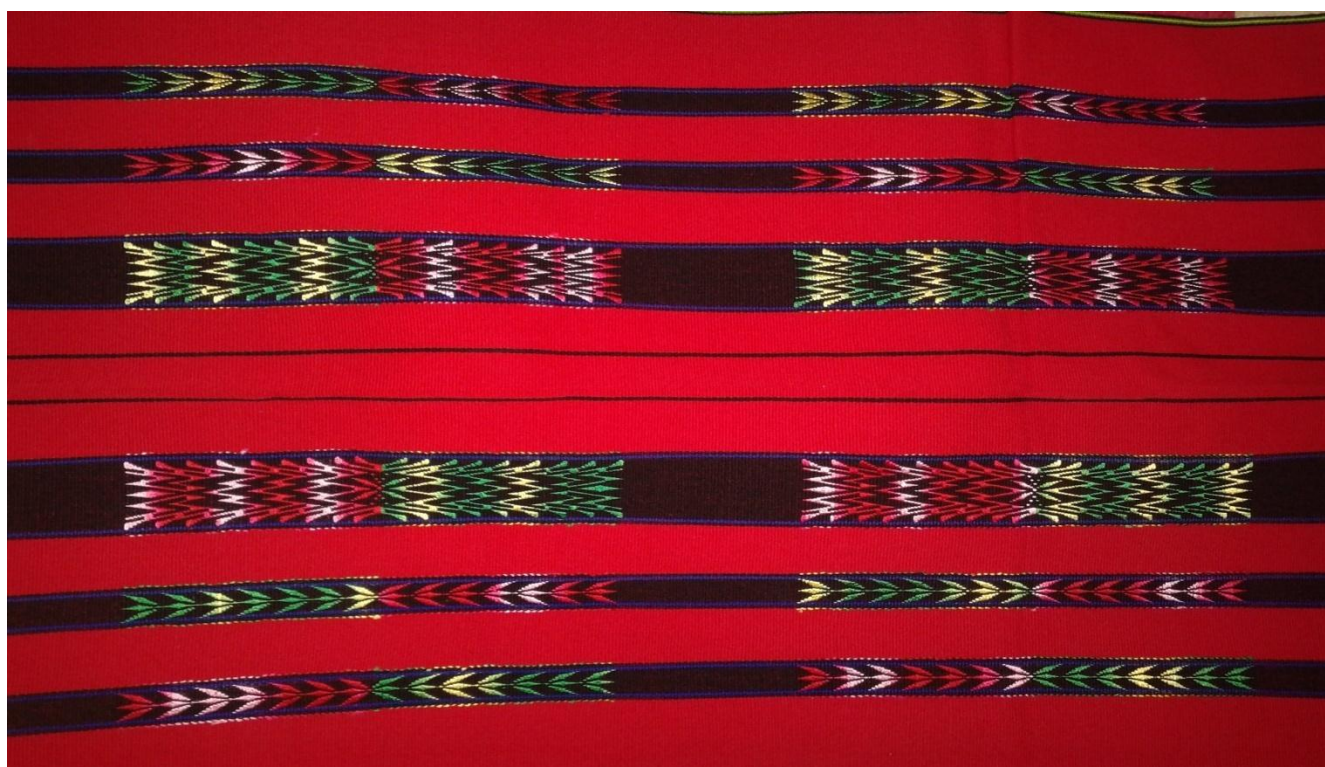
Plate-5: Lotha Traditional Shawls.



*Phanrupsu*: Worn by a man who had done the *Shishang* ceremony, the first social *genna*.



*Longpensu*: Worn by a man who had performed the *Ozu esu* (Stone dragging ceremony).



*Opvurum*: Worn by the wife of a man who had performed the *Etha* (Mending) Ceremony.



Plate-6: The Lothas Celebrating *Tokhu Emong* (Post Harvest Festival) with songs, dances & merry making.



Wokha Town

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **LAND AND PEOPLE**

Nagaland, a part of Assam and North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) in 1947, became the 16<sup>th</sup> state of India in 1963. Statehood came as a result of political agreement. In this respect Nagaland's case is unique and special constitutional protection was also provided under Article 371(A) of the Indian constitution to safeguard the culture, traditions and way of life of the Nagas. One of the smaller hill tribes of India, Nagaland is known for its myriad tribes with their rich culture and tradition. (Nagaland State Human Development Report 2004:14). Each tribe is distinct and unique in character from the others in terms of customs, language and attire.

By whatever name people have called this realm, hidden among the mountains of India's Northeast, Nagaland has always evoked a sense of mysticism and awe, intensified by the remoteness of its geographical location. (Directorate of Tourism, 2012:1). One of the seven sisters of the Northeast, the state is situated between the valley of the Brahmaputra river and neighboring Burma (Myanmar). The eastern boundary is marked by the Patkai range; to the west the terrain flattens out into the plains of Assam. To the North lies Tirap, a district of Arunachal Pradesh and Nowgong and Sibsagar of Assam, to the south Manipur. These boundaries enclosed an area of 16,527sq km, most of which are hills and mountains. (Ganguli, 1984:266). It lies between 25°6' and 27°4' Latitude North of Equator and between the Longitudinal lines 93°20' and 95°15'E. (Statistical Handbook 2013: 2)

The population of Nagaland, according to the 2011 Census is 19, 78,502. Out of this, 71.14% of the population lives in rural areas. As recorded in the statistical handbook published by the Nagaland Directorate of Economics and statistics 2013, the density of the population is 119 per sq. km. 974122 are workers and 1004380 are non- workers. 79.55% of the population is literate.

The topography of Nagaland is nearly all hilly, the highest peak being Saramati (3841 metres) in the district of Kiphire that borders Myanmar. Many rivers cut through this mountainous terrain. The main ones are Dhansiri, Doyang, Dikhu, Milak, Tizu and Zunki. A population of only about 1.9 million, the number may sound meager when compared with the vast population of the Indian peninsula; but these few people are composed of 16 major tribes along with other sub tribes, each representing a different culture and preserving unique customs, language and dress. It has a rich oral tradition which has been handed down the generations. These colorful people span across 11 administrative districts, Kohima being the capital.

The multiplicity of the tribe, within such a limited space, could be due to the fact that the Naga ancestors migrated to the present location in different groups and they remained confined to their ridges and mountainous terrain. This subsequently resulted in their unique characteristic of appearing to be both one people and many tribe, displaying both unity and diversity in their customs, traditions, attire and political systems. (State human development report 2004:19)

The focus of the present study is the Lothas, one of the sixteen major tribes of Nagaland who inhabit the District of Wokha. The district is Situated on the mid – west of the State of Nagaland and is intercepted at the heart by latitude 26 degree 8' N and longitude 94 degrees 18' E. (Ghosh, 1979:1). With a geographical area of 1628 sq km, it is the third smallest district in terms of area of the state. It is situated in the mid western part of Nagaland,



adjacent to Sibsagar plains of Assam state. It is bounded by Mokokchung district in the North, Kohima district in the South, Zunheboto district in the East, and the state of Assam in the west. The Wokha District is situated at a latitude of 26°8' North and a Longitude of 94°18' East. (Wokha District Planning & Development Board). According to the basic table presenting the provisional census of 2011 published by the directorate of economics and statistics, the population of the district is 166,343 persons. The literacy rate is 87.69 percent. The density of the population is 102 persons per sq. Km.

The topography of the district is more or less similar with that of the other districts in the state, having hill ranges and ridges directed by the seasonal streams. The district is dominated by three ranges namely, Bhandari Range, also called Lower Range or outer Ranges with Baghty, Changpang and Ralan circles, Sanis Range, also called middle range, with Sungro, Aitepyong, Sanis and Lotsu circles, and Wokha range which falls in the upper area of the district with Chukitong, Englan and Phiro circles. It is a long chain of ranges and has emerged from Rengma area in the Kohima district. It is interesting to note that Doyang which is the biggest river in Nagaland state flows through the middle of the Wokha district and it crosses all the three ranges of the district. Wokha Town, the head quarter of the district falls in the middle part of the range. The altitude of Wokha Town is about 1500 Metres and it is the highest altitude of the inhabited areas of the district. (Ghosh, 1979: 2)

Mount Tiyi, 6, 600 ft above sea level is the highest peak in the area. This hill is important in the Legends of the Lotha tribe as much as to the whole Nagas who believed it to be a repository of their deceased. The mountain is referred to as the “abode of the departed souls”. Legend has it that human spirits upon their death travel to this mountain for their final and perpetual rest. It is one of the few places in Nagaland where Rhododendrons are found in plenty. When the Lothas migrated to the present area they built the first village on the southern ridge of Mt. Tiyi called *Tiyilongchum*. It was from this place that they spread out to

the whole of the district. Milada Ganguli makes us picture the Land of the Lothas in the following words, “The hills inhabited by the Lotha tribe belong to one of the most fascinating parts of Nagaland. They are not isolated mountain peaks, but one vast sweep of rolling green ranges, separating enchanting valleys and turbulent rivers, which the ancestors of this tribe had to cross when they were driven out from their original settlement in the south by their Angami pursuers. It is said that it was such a tremendous throng of clansmen, that they were obliged to divide themselves into groups and found settlements, and bring the surrounding land under cultivation to save themselves from starvation”. (1984: 81).

Racially the Lothas belonged to the Mongoloid stock with Tibeto- Burman group of language. They are medium brown in complexion and medium statured. Like any other Naga tribes, they have mongoloid features. Unlike the Aos in the adjoining Mokokhung district the Lothas are not having any difference in language between the upper and Lower Lothas except some slight difference in dialect. (Ghosh, 1979:30). The language they speak is called ‘*Kyongyi*’ (Lotha language). The Lothas have an oral tradition and the facts and history are known from the stories, legends and songs passed from one generation to another orally. The Lothas, Aos and the Semas believed to have possessed in the past a Naga script which is said to have been written on dried skin of an animal and it was carried by their forefathers during migration through the Patkai ranges. Written on such skin, it was convenient enough for the purpose of rolling. But as this script was not kept under proper custody, time came when it was eaten up by a dog. According to tradition, all the elderly people who had written them had died by that time and owing to the loss of memory, the script could not be written again. (Ghosh, 1979:31). With the arrival of the American Baptist missionaries towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Lotha language was reduced to writing in the Roman script.

Wokha was made the district headquarter of the Naga Hills under Assam by the British in 1876. When the head quarter was shifted to Kohima in 1878, Wokha remained as a

sub division. In 1889, due to administrative convenience, the sub divisional headquarter was shifted to Mokokchung. After Indian independence, Wokha became a sub division in 1957 under Naga Hills Tuensang Area, and remained so till she became a district of Nagaland state in 1973. At present, the district has four Assembly constituencies and 125 recognized villages. It is divided into 13 administrative units and 7 rural development blocks. (Wokha district human development report 2013)

## ORIGIN AND MIGRATION

Tradition says that the Nagas migrated to the present habitat in different waves and from different directions. They have no written records, therefore our basis of information is the oral traditions, no matter how vague or illogical they may sound. T. Kikon, traces the series of migration of the Lothas as follows: Mongolia, Mansora (Manchuria), China, inner Burma (now Myanmar), Manipur, Mao, Kezhakenoma, Kohima, Tseminyu and finally the present Wokha.(1998:8-9). All the traditions points to the East as their origin of migration, as can be seen from one of the prayers of the Lotha *Pvuti* (priest) to the *Ronsu* God which says:

*Oh Mansuri – a vanathung ronsu,*

*Oh Kutcha vanathung ronsu,*

*Oh Thungpocheura vanathung Ronsyu.*

When translated it means “Oh harvest God that has been with us since our days in Manchuria, Burma and Manipur, etc. (Murry, 1995:51).

Oral tradition says that the ancestors of the Lothas came to this Earth from the underworld. There is a legend about *Rankhandan* which literally means the oldest, and possibly a totem. When the tribe moved from Manchuria (or Mongolia), the priest of the tribe *Rankhandan* (The oldest) prepared a pack of rituals to take himself and follow the tribe.



Unfortunately he could not cross the hole due to his stag-like horns and so he was left behind. He requested the brothers to observe the rites and rituals of the old world and to give him yearly offering in remembrance. Therefore, the primitive Lothas observed the “*Epo Etha*” ceremony every year in remembrance of *Rankhandan*. This is supported by another tradition of the Lothas, according to which the Lotha ancestors, three brothers, *Limhachan*, *Ezonmontsu* and *Rankhandan*, the ancestors of the three phratries of the Lothas came out of a hole which they saw while chasing a porcupine. According to J. P. Mills, this “hole” as mentioned in the traditions may not be a hole, but it might be a narrow passage somewhere in the Himalayan region through which they came out. (Mills, 1922:03).

Another important tradition connected with the migration story is the miraculous stone called by the Lothas as *Phitssonlong*, (Dry- increasing- stone) at Kezhakenoma which has the magical property of doubling up the paddy basked on it. Other tribes such as the Angamis and Maos also have a similar tradition of such a magic stone at Khezhakenoma in Mao area. In course of their migration, the Lothas homesteaded at this place called ‘*Phitsson*’. The Lothas are believed to have marched from this place to Rerang (Ghosh, 1979:19) in Mao and travelled along the foot of the Japfu Mountain. On their Northward trail, they halted at *Khayima* (kohima). *Khayima* in Lotha means unable to count or uncountable. According to Pvukhomo Humtsoe of Pangti, at this place, the Lothas were many in number that the chief could not enumerate them and so they called the place “*Khayima*” or miscounting or unable to count. (The kohima people have their own version of the meaning of the word). The Lothas then left Khayima and marched to a place near Tsenza Lake and from there they again marched to Nerhema. From there they proceeded to Honohoyunton, somewhere in the present Rengma area. Moving on northward, they came to Tiylongchum, at the foothill of Mount Tiyi where they settled and stayed for many years. At this place the Lothas assembled and counted the number of people. . In Lotha dialect “*wo*” or “*owo*” means number of people.

“*kha*” means counting the number of people. So the place in which the Lotha ancestors had assembled and counted themselves of their number was named as “Wokha”. Perhaps, during the long course of their migration the Lothas might have lost count of their true number and so they collected in one place and counted themselves.

But finally this site was abandoned on account of several reasons. According to T. Kikon, Tiya Longchum was abandoned due to over population, scarcity of water and infertility of the soil. Besides these the menace of the tiger which killed nine women of the village prompted them to abandon the village. The Lothas then spread to villages like Longsa, Longsachung, Zukhumki, Hayimong, Longidang, Umhor josu, Wokha, Yikhum, Elumyo, Tsungiki and Koio etc of the present district. (1993:8)

Another tradition says that the ancestors of the Lothas and the plainsmen of Assam were once brothers. This tradition is also supported by J. P Mills, who wrote that the Lothas and the plains men were once one people who migrated from a place called Lengka in the North West of Naga Hills. They split up into two bodies, one of them was the plainsmen of the Brahmaputra valley and the other the hill men. (Mills, 1922:4-5 ). According to P. E. Ezung, the evidence of their oneness is a Long Knife or dao (Machete) called *Yantung* which is still kept in Okotso village, which was given by the plainsmen, their brothers. (1992: 15).

## NOMENCLATURE

Like the word ‘Naga’ the derivation of the word ‘Lotha’ is obscure. It has been interpreted in various ways. According to Zanao Mozhui, ‘*Lo*’ means sacrifice or offering, ‘*Tha*’ means fully or satisfactorily. (2004:04). Therefore Lotha means people who fully sacrificed to the satisfaction of the Gods. Another interpretation is that the word came from the Khuza language ‘*Latha*’ which means ‘gone to a far off place’ or ‘gone ahead’. This

theory is postulated because the British first encountered the Khuzas and Angamis in the 1930s and they might have acquired the name Lotha from the Khuza word *Latha*. Another interpretation is that their original name was '*kyong*' which means human. J. P. Mills mentions that the Lothas called themselves as *kyon*, meaning simply Man. (1922: 01). In the absence of written sources, several attempts have been made by intellectuals and scholars to retrace the origin of the generic name 'Lotha' through probable dimensions. However, it is not the intention of the present study to argue or postulate any hypothesis on this subject nor does it consider it a purpose here.

## PRE- COLONIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOTHAS

In this sub- section focus is made on the question of how the Lothas lived, subsisted, organized themselves into groups, socialized and governed themselves before they were resettled, modernized and converted to Christianity.

### The village polity

All Naga tribes lived in village settings. Every village was independent of one another and predominantly run on the principles of democracy, either in the form of a republic or monarchy. The primary unit of the Lotha tribe is the village. Every Lotha village is a sovereign state ruled by a chief (*Ekhung*) assisted by an informal council of elders. For selection of village chief, unlike some other Naga tribes which is based on hereditary system, the Lotha Naga is based on election system represented by whole village. (Ovung, 2012:23). Before the introduction of the British rule, the Lothas governed themselves by a set of unwritten laws called '*Pyimtsumotsui shikhu*' (Customary law) which was strictly enforced by



a council of elders known as '*Tongti chochang*'. (Ngulli, 1994:17). Under them was another dimension called *Pangi*. These council of old men or elders are in general called *Sotsoi* (meat eaters) because they inflict fines of pork on cases and eat the fine. Usually the village is run as an individual whole, but where the khels are big the tendency is for the leading man of each khel to manage their affairs independently. After the establishment of the British rule, the post of the chief (*Ekhung or Esapvui*) was replaced by a headman selected by the government.

Like the rest of the Naga tribes, the Lothas built their villages on top of the hill. The villages were generally built on a commanding location, the selection of the site largely influenced by considerations of defensive strategy. Inter- village feuds being the order of the day, it was necessary that the village was so situated that a raiding party could not surprise it. Village is generally founded by members of several *Jipo* (clans) which are also divided into *Mhitso* (Kindred). They have exogamous system of marriage. A man marries his wife from any of the clans other than his own. This is the reason why several clans are included in founding a village. A village was usually divided into two or more '*yankho*' or khels depending upon the size and population.

Traditionally, the citizens of a village are classified into three groups: (1) Rulers (*Esopvui/Esapvui*), (2) victorious and mighty men (*Ekhyo Ekhung*), and (3) commoners (*Arushurui/ kishoroe*). (Ovung, 2012: 24). The elected members of the village administration constitute the first group. It includes the village headman. They are decision making body and all the disputes in the village are settled by them. The second group is those who had performed social feast of merit. They were entitled to be elected as members of village administration and had rights to participate in the debates on village issues and decision making. A man of this group can be chosen as village *Pvuti* (Priest) provided that he was living with his wife whom he married first, blameless and had not been anytime bitten by wild animals. The third group was the people who had not performed social feast of merit. They

are not eligible to be chosen as leaders of the village or decision making. However, they were assigned duties for religious rituals, burial rituals and all other minor domestic rituals of the village. This kind of classification does not exist anymore in the Lotha society.

The central piece in a village used to be the *Chumpo* (Morung), a kind of bachelor's dormitory for the village youth. The *Chumpo* fulfilled a variety of functions; it was a place where human and animal skulls were kept as relics; it was a guard house where the village braves kept their daos, spears and shields; it was also a meeting place where important decisions relating to war and peace were taken.(Singh,1972:31). For the Lothas, the *Chumpo* is equivalent to modern educational institution. However, it was more than that. It was a social institution. It was in the *Chumpo* that the young Lotha not only learnt the cultures, values and norms, and warfare tactics of their village but also provided the structure for the working principles of the village council. *Chumpo* are instituted in a hierarchical fashion. The eldest group took the responsibility of teaching the younger groups as well as making important decisions. The inmates were divided into different age groups, each with different responsibilities until they reached the eldest and the highest group. In this way, the *Chumpo* provided a system for the `democratic governance of the villages.

The *Chumpo* was the pride of the village, and it was always decorated with trophies of war and the finest wood- carvings that the villagers were capable of.

Another important characteristic of the Lotha village community was the *Yingaeden*, the age group working company. There were junior, intermediate, senior, women and men's group working in each member's house or field together in terms of the principle of synergy. The long hours of work go without exhaustion due to the singing, fun and folktales as they work in the sun and in the rain. This age group company in some way acts as the certifying body of the individual's credibility. To be excluded from this age group company is to lose respect in the society. This system provided the group with not only an identity, but also a

sense of belonging. It tapped the energy of the adolescents and created a bond that would last for the rest of their life in the village. (Roy, 2004:46). It was an institution similar to a modern club or a youth organization in the Christian church.

Mention may also be made of the *Etssikho*, the khel or sector Assembly. Every sector or khel of the village has one or more open air circles where all men gather every evening for at least an hour or two relaxing and chit chatting. The subject matter of the conversation could be anything current or old, seasoned by humors and teasing when the topic is not of serious concern. These village media is attended by at least one male member of each family to have the family updated with current news. This assembly keeps the members of the sector in solidarity as it acts as the fastest channel of communication.

#### The socio- cultural life

The Lotha society was patrilineal and patriarchal in nature. However, by no means were women considered as second class citizens of the village. There was no discrimination against women. Lotha women had almost equal status with men in the society, because in every field of physical and domestic work they work equally. The most important dance of the women was a dance for bringing rain and to avert drought. This perhaps indicates that the women were more worried about the crop failure than the men folk. (Ghosh, 1979: 44-45). And it is a fact that women work harder in the field than the men. It was only in matters of broader social activities such as village administration, feud and peace, litigation etc that women generally did not take part. The laws of inheritance also followed the male line. Monogamy was strictly practiced. Though women were excluded from inheritance and the freedom to speak in the village council, nevertheless, they were not subordinated in any way

by the men folk who have always respected them. It was an egalitarian society where everyone lives with least botheration about class classification.

One of the chief characteristics of the Lotha culture was the practice of *Osho* (feast of merit). This practice provides a glimpse into the communitarian aspect of the Lothas. It fulfilled an extremely important socio- religious and economic function in the Lotha society. The Lothas were by nature fond of feasting. For every achievement like good harvest or successful raids they arranged feasts and celebrate the occasion. The celebration of any festival was considered as incomplete without a sumptuous meal. Thus, feasting of the whole community and a feast given by an individual family for the whole village were an important part of the traditional way of life, the means whereby sharing was practiced and friendships were maintained. (Pongener, 2011: 57).

This *Osho* was a social ceremony, in fact a series of ceremonies performed by the married man in order to uplift his and his wife's status. Each series necessitates the expenditure of large quantities of food-stuffs. The more a man perform this feast, the more prominent his status become in the village for, among the Lothas, a man did not gain social prestige by merely possessing wealth, but only by spending it for the benefit of others. Thus a man and his wife work hard in the field to store away food in order to organize such feast. The man who observe this feast was entitled to wear special dresses and ornaments and decorate his house in a particular manner, marking him out from others in the village.( Singh, 1972: 73). Even so, this feast was not an obligatory event.

As with any other Naga tribe, the Lothas also practiced head- hunting. The Nagas in general practiced head- hunting because, they believed that enemies' heads brought prosperity to the village directly connected to the fertility of the crops. (Furer-Haimendorf, 1946:95). In the days of head- hunting, the person who could bring more heads from the enemy villages was publicly honored. They received respect, honor and prestige in the society. They were



respected because the survival and honor of the village depended on them. (Ruivah,1993:190). The one who could kill an enemy inside the enemy's village was regarded as the most able bodied of the village, because he could the enemy within the village which was guarded day and night. Women and children were not spared in head- hunting. As a matter of fact, a woman's head was considered a most prized trophy. This was for a variety of reasons. Women were always given the maximum protection by the village folk, and taking a woman's head meant penetrating deep into the adversary's ranks with all its concomitant risks. Possibly there was also the desire to reduce the enemy population by killing their women folk. Yet another reason could be the desire for women's hair which was used for ornamental purposes. (Singh, 1972: 37).

Among the Lothas, a woman whose husband had gone on a raid was to remain chaste, and was also forbidden to weave as it was believed that any breach of this rule would cause the husband's feet to get entangled in creepers whereupon he would be caught and killed by the enemy. The heads were hung on the *Menkitong*, the sacred tree of the village. The practice of head- hunting, to a great extent conditioned the life of a village and its people. The village was always well defended, women and children were guarded, the villagers went to fields in groups so that they might be able to face any sudden threat and some persons were assigned on guard duty. Head- hunting ended among the Lothas in the 1880s with the establishment of the British administration in the area.

The Lothas are known for their colorful dances and songs. Like the other Naga tribes these cultural aspect are exhibited in their festivals and celebration which mainly revolve around agriculture, their main economy. The Nagas are admired for their rich repertory of folk dances and songs. In spite of the tremendous advance of modernity into their lives, the Naga people have a penchant for vibrant dances and songs praising the brave deeds of ancient warriors and folk heroes, love songs that immortalize tragic love stories, gospel songs in folk

tunes. Festivals are celebrated by the various tribes year round during which villages become most lively. (Lanunungsang & Ovung, 2012:14). The festivals are marked by thanksgiving, prayer for blessings, sharing of joy and happiness, forgiveness, reconciliation and friendship.

In the olden days, the Lothas celebrated a number of festivals in a year. The most important among them is the *Tokhu Emong*. The word *Tokhu* means ‘feast’ and *Emong* means ‘rest’ or ‘holiday’. It is the biggest festival observed by the Lothas at the end of the agricultural year following the harvest. It is a festival of thanksgiving to God for bumper harvest and blessing throughout the year. Besides, it is a festival where past enmities are forgiven, new friendships are forged, and where villagers exchange gifts and presents. It also grants permission for courtship and marriage and for construction of new houses. With the harvest finally done, the people take respite from the sweating toils and settle down to enjoy the fruits of their hard labor. It is also called *Vami Tokhu* by the people which means a leisurely winter feast, as it was held during the month of *Chopuk*, corresponding to November. Spreading over nine days, the festival has each day having a significance of its own with specific rituals to be observed.

The hallmarks of the festival are the colorful dances, traditional games, folksongs, folklores, feasting, drinking of *Soko* (rice beer) and merry-making. It was also a time to don and display the traditional attire. Age-old values such as generosity, hospitality, valor, communitarian spirit are passed down through the festivals. The entire villagers participate in the preparation and celebration of the festival. During this period, the village gates are renovated, wells are cleaned and purified, roads are cleaned and houses are decorated, displaying proudly their prizes and achievements in full view. It is also a time for thanksgiving, reconciliation, sharing and accommodating each other. The most beautiful aspect is that, the past raucous are forgiven, friendships are renewed, new ties are established and bonds of close intimacy formed. (Lanunungsang & Ovung, 2012: 69). After the

observance of the *Tokhu Emong*, new houses are constructed, old ones are renovated, the *Chumpo*, the boys' dormitories are repaired, marriages are held and new cultivation are contemplated. The essence of this festival is that everything old is gone and now all is new, ushering in a new life that may be interpreted as the beginning of a new year in its broader sense.

### The economic life

During the head- hunting days, every Naga village was a sovereign state. Each village was more or less self- sufficient. Villages had their own cultivable land, sufficient to support its population. There were livestock for use as meat and a wide range of forest around each village, for getting building materials, firewood, food and it also serves as hunting ground for them. For their survival, the villagers were not required to go to another village. (Thong, 2012: 12). This was true for the Lotha villages too. Since time immemorial the Lothas were hardworking people. Though they were keen fishermen and skilled hunters, yet they used agriculture and animal husbandry as their basic occupation. The Lotha region being hilly, the most common practice of agriculture was Jhum cultivation i.e, shifting cultivation. The people were self sufficient in food grains. Since the olden days the people cultivated rice, maize, beans, peas, yam, brinjal, chilly, pumpkin, ginger, tomato, bitter- guard etc,. Rice is the staple food of the tribe and the most important crop grown.

The forest land and water bodies constitute important economic resources of the Lothas. The Doyang River benefited the people with its great wealth of fish. The Lothas were passionate fishermen and expert swimmers. They are also the only tribe in the Naga Hills that make dug-out boats, which they use on the Doyang. (Ganguli,1984:82). Fishing rights over

any particular stretch of the river was governed by the local customs. They are usually held by one village or group of villages which guard their valuable rights jealously. Each of them could set trap only in certain parts of the stream. The most interesting fishing activity is the community fishing organized by the village or groups of villages who hold the fishing rights over a certain part of the river. The most effective method proved to be the poisoning of the river by using the root of a highly poisonous plant called *Notsu* but its use was prohibited by the then British administration. The juice of the creeper *Niro* is also used to stupefy the fish. The most treasured catch is the enormous cat- fish *Zhumyvu*. (*Bagarius yarrellii* or *Silundia gangetica*).

An interesting aspect of the flora of the area is the abundance of edible wild plants and fruits. The number of edible plants found in the wild far outnumbered domesticated vegetables. Rice, the main staple food is kept in the *Oson* (granary) outside the village to ensure that the food supply is saved even if the village is burned. Animals like dogs, cows, pigs, Mithun (*Bos Frontalis*), fowls etc were domesticated for food and trade. There were exchanges of things like salt, dry fish, cotton, ginger etc with the plainsmen of Assam. After the harvest, women were engaged with weaving for the whole family whereas men engaged in bamboo works, cane works, blacksmith, wooden works etc. (Mozhui, 2004:15). They were self sufficient and self reliant.

Thus the Lothas, before the advent of British colonizers and Christian missionaries were self- sufficient, independent, colorful people. Their society projected a great sense of community- based approach and a deep co-operative relationship among themselves. In every sphere of their life, be it political, social, economic and religious, they had the concept of togetherness and oneness. The society reveals elements of egalitarian social condition. It follows a democratic form of government, where the power of people is not in the hands of a



single group but with the whole community. And yet, one could also imagine the dreadful environment of head- hunting in which they lived.

During the colonial period, along with the coming of the British rule, Christianity was introduced. As a result, the population is now predominantly Christians, though some of the inhabitants of the villages still follow the old religious practices. The first contact of the Lothas with Christianity started about 1885, with the arrival of W.E.Witter. Once the missionaries started the work among the Lotha people, not only Christianization but also social transformation was aimed at. The tribe's religious customs and practices were considered superstitious and devil- dominated, which they had to abandon when they accepted the Christian faith. From the very beginning the American Baptist Missionaries saw the value of education to serve the purpose of evangelization. What this pre- literate tribe needed first of all was a written script that the Bible might be translated to their own language. The next task was to start schools to educate the people in order to make them understand the Bible. Although the missionaries originally started schools in order to help with the missionary work, eventually these institutions benefited the region in many areas. An important aspect was the significant transformation of the Lotha society which was brought about by the new faith and modern western education.

## PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This thesis makes a comprehensive study of the traditional religion of the Lotha, the rites and rituals associated with it, the introduction of Christianity and the impacts brought to the Lotha society and culture in its wake. It investigates and identifies the areas in which changes were brought and the role of Christianity in those changes. Two reasons which gave

impetus to this research study are firstly, no adequate research study has been done so far on the traditional Lotha religion. Secondly, no in depth and objective study has been done on the role played by Christianity and modern education in the cultural change of the Lothas. Moreover, it will be timely record of their past and fast vanishing tradition.

Both available primary and secondary sources are consulted. However, the main sources are drawn from personal interviews and first hand inquiries with the surviving village elders, who still hold on to the old faith, or those converts who still remembers the past experiences. Field studies have been based upon carefully selected respondents, representative of the different ranges inhabited by the Lothas to reflect the cultural variations, the different denominational allegiance of Christians and also of the followers of the traditional religion. Attention is paid to the rich oral tradition associated with the religion and culture of the tribe. It is apt here to agree with Dr. Visier Sanyu when he said that “ reconstructing the history of societies dispossessed of any written records is an extremely difficult task requiring unique and unconventional methodology geared to meet this particular problem” (2008:02) . Dr. Sanyu further recommended the methodologies such as that developed by Jan Vansina by quoting him thus; “whether memory changes or not, culture is reproduced by remembrance put into words and deeds. The mind through memory carries culture from generation to generation. How is it possible for a mind to remember and out of nothing spin complex ideas, messages and instructions for living which manifest continuity overtime is one of the greatest wonders one can study, comparable only to human intelligence and thought itself. Oral tradition should be central to students of ideology, of society, of psychology, of art, and finally, of History”. (1985: 11).

As a member of the same community, it is possible to access more insight into the grass root people and into their beliefs, practices, customs and aspirations and have better understanding of the changing mode of every aspect of their life. I have tried to present the

facts and chronology as authentic as possible and analyzed them objectively. Many of the facts are established facts which are just reproduced. I have tried my best to use all the available used and unused data to make this work as authentic as possible. For the chapters on the history of the introduction, growth and impact of Christianity sources such as local church publications, church records, jubilee souvenirs etc are consulted extensively to piece together information and reconstruct it based on these.



## CHAPTER 2

### TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND COSMOLOGY

Religion is an all- pervading supernatural phenomenon in man's life. For this reason it has been considered universal. Religion has exercised the most profound influence over man's thoughts and behavior from times beyond human recollection. It has been defined as the unique attempt of each society to express the meaning of its existence. Often people's environment is hostile, which disturb the balance of living. So their religion provides people with a framework within which to come to terms with their environment and to give their experience a meaning.

Although no one is certain of the word's origin, we know that ' Religion' derives from Latin and that languages influenced by Latin have equivalents to the English word 'religion'. Various explanations of the word religion has been given such as " Re- reading" referring to the repetition of scripture which is derived from Latin *Relegio*; "treating carefully" or "to go over again" derived from Latin *Relegere*; "re- connection to the divine" or "to bind fast" derived from Latin *Religare*. An alternate interpretation of the "reconnection" etymology emphasizes a sense of servitude to God. (Longkumer& Moanungsang,2012:2). Russel T. Mc Cutcheon defines Religion in the following words, " It is today commonly used to refer to those beliefs, behaviours, and social institutions that have something to do with speculations on any, and all, of the following; the origin, end and significance of the universe; what happens after death, the existence and wishes of powerful, non- human beings such as spirits, ancestors, angels, demons and Gods; and the manner in which all of this shapes human behavior". (Partridge (ed), 1982:10). The 19<sup>th</sup> century French sociologist Emile Durkheim offers a more comprehensive definition when he writes that religion is "a unified system of

beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community”. ( 1912: 44). It is a strong statement that the main function of religion in society is to strengthen human communities. Anthropology approaches religion as an aspect of culture. Religious practices and beliefs are important because they are central to the ways in which we organize our social lives. They shape our understanding of our place in the world and determine how we relate to one another and to the rest of the natural and supernatural order.

For pre-literate societies, religion is almost the same as culture. Religion becomes more important to a tribal who live nearer to nature, and whose life is largely influenced by its overwhelming forces. They have no religious writings or scriptures. Instead, beliefs are handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. In India, under the influence of E.B Tylor, the then British Government of India informed the official administrators including ethnographers to employ the term ‘animism’ to explain the religion of the tribal or indigenous communities. (Longkumer& Moanungsang,2012: 29). Thus, J.P. Mills called the Lotha religion as animism.( 1922:113). The same term was used by the Christian missionaries to describe the Lotha religion. Again the indigenous religion of the tribal people are described by using terms like pre-literate, primitive, traditional etc,. In the present chapter, a brief sketch is given on the nature of the Lotha religion. The chapter also deals with how the primitive Lothas understood the supernatural, and how their religion shaped their life experiences, gave them meaning and purpose, influences family life, provides the contours of the yearly calendar, provides norms, values and key rituals that help solidify the people’s sense of belonging in their communities and in the company of a higher power. Using sources drawn mainly from oral narrators attempt is made to study meticulously the ritualistic components of the traditional religion. It also takes note of the role of the religious officials.

## NATURE OF THE LOTHIA RELIGION

Anthropologists have been concerned with the origin of religion and have put forward various theories. Animism, Animatism, Naturism, Naturalism etc all try to understand religion in its primordial form. This reference has been necessary because the religion that is to be studied belongs to a class which many anthropologists have called 'primitive religion'. The use of this term to describe the indigenous religions of the tribes has run into difficulties. Some writers pointed out that the word 'primitive' cannot be used to indicate this religion on two reasons. Firstly, if we take the term 'primitive' in the sense of 'early', 'ancient', 'primal', it cannot refer to this religion, as primitive man and his religion in this sense disappeared from the world thousands of years ago. It is wrong to speak of the religion of living people as primitive. Secondly, the term 'primitive' could mean 'outdated', 'unsophisticated', 'backward', or 'savage'. In this sense, the term 'primitive' stands at the opposite end of the pole from 'civilized'. Thus, used in this meaning to refer to these religion, the term 'primitive' can indicate that they are unsophisticated and crude in comparison with the religions of developed civilizations.

E.E Evans Pritchard, while examining the theories of primitive religion writes; "in these theories it was assumed, taken for granted, that we were at one end of the scale of human progress and the so-called savages were at the other end, and that, because primitive men were on a rather low technological level, their thought and custom must in all respects be the antithesis of ours. We are rational, primitive peoples pre logical, living in a world of dreams and make-believe, of mystery and awe; we are capitalists, they communists; we are monogamous, they promiscuous; we are monotheists, they fetishists, animists, pre-animists or what have you and so on". (1965:105). Primitive man was thus represented as childish, crude, prodigal, and comparable to animals and imbeciles. All this fitted very well with

colonialist and other racial and ethnic prejudice, and it indicate lack of understanding and sympathy from those races which considers themselves superior to others (Idowa, 1993:425-26).

P. T. Philips, while making a survey of the growth of Baptist churches in Nagaland wrote on the Nagas as having no deep rooted faith or elaborate practices. To quote him, “Their religion is only a matter of certain rituals and observances to appease the spirits. They are nothing but certain formalities and practices. In fact it cannot be called a true worship. Their belief is very shallow and unsophisticated” (1976:183). Naga Theological writers like Mar Pongener and Renthly Keitzar argues that calling the Naga religion as ‘Unsophisticated religion’ or ‘savage religion’, as these writers puts it does not hold ground for, though they may not be as developed as other cultures, or though they may not have had a doctrinal clarity as other religions, their religion is certainly not absurd. These theories necessitate the search for alternative words to refer to these religions, and terms like ‘pre- literate’ and ‘traditional’ came to be used. Renthly keitzar suggests that the Naga Religion in general should be called ‘Naga Traditional Religion’ (1995: 83) in order to make it more specific to the ethnic group.

The validity of the use of the term ‘primitive’ to refer to the Lotha traditional religion may be brought out by understanding the nature and characteristics of primitive religions in general. Primitive religion is not a revealed religion, in the sense that it does not have a founder, as in the case of other major religions like Buddhism (founded by Gautama Buddha 6<sup>th</sup> cent BC), Zoroastrianism (Iranian religion founded by Zoroaster, Persian religious teacher, 6<sup>th</sup> cent BC) or Christianity for that matter. It has no doctrines, scriptures, prophets or places of worship like temples or mosques. Their beliefs, rites and rituals were handed down through generations orally. Secondly, it is a group religion. The primitive individual is so identified with the clan that he could not think away from it. Group thoughts, custom and tradition conditioned the life of the primitive people. ( Srivastava,1974:28). Thirdly, the characteristic



elements of primitive religion are animism, spiritism, magic, ritualistic ceremonies and sacrifice.

Taking these into consideration, the term 'Primitive' may be used to refer to the traditional Lotha religion on several reasons. Like the pre- literate people who used primitive techniques such as hunting and agriculture for maintaining their life, the Lotha also depended on such methods to maintain their life. The Lothas, for centuries remained in isolation, and therefore out of general influence from other culture and religion, until hundred and fifty years ago or so when their isolation was broken by the inroads of the British rule and American Baptist missionaries. Until then they were pre- literate and primitive. In civilized religion, faith or adherence to it is a personal choice. But for primitive peoples, religion and the rites and rituals associated with it are a part of the socio- economic structure and a part of everyday existence. Every individual adheres to religion by way of custom and practice rather than out of choice. This holds true for the Lotha individual too.

The subsistence strategy of the primitive people conditioned their religion. For people living in mountainous region and primitive set up, the forces of nature plays an important role in their belief systems. Their subsistence depended on the whims and caprices of nature. Thus to get tangible results, the benignant as well as the malignant powers are to be appeased, to avert natural calamities and disasters. As any other primitive religion, the Lotha religion was shaped in such environmental condition which may not seek high inordinate principles of life and philosophy, but it is a pragmatic religion which allows a more powerful role to the supernatural forces and a larger area of operation. In view of the above reasons, the term 'primitive' is used, in an extended sense to refer to the traditional Lotha religion. Such has no racial or ethnic bias, and it is justifiable.

The indigenous cosmos is spatially divided into a series of overlapping tier. At its simplest, the universe has the earth sandwiched between the heavenly terrain of the Gods

above and the subterranean world below. (Partridge, 2007: 116). The Lotha understood that there is a pre-existent supreme being inhabiting the upper strata of the cosmology, and often remote from everyday human activity. Occupying the lower strata of the cosmos, alongside humankind and the flora and fauna surrounding it, were lesser deities or supernatural beings (spirits) some malevolent and some benevolent. These spirits, whether malevolent, benevolent or ambivalent are regarded as primary causal forces potentially influencing every facet of personal wellbeing and social relation.

The Lothas were religious from time immemorial, and hence no definite time or place about the origin of their religion can be given with certainty. Zanao Mozhui traced the origin of the word 'Lotha' by saying that the word is derived from '*Lo*' which means 'sacrifice' or 'offering', while *Tha* means 'fully' or 'satisfactorily'. For him 'Lotha' therefore means 'people who fully sacrificed to the satisfaction of the Gods'. (2004: 4). So, from the beginning the Lothas were religious people. Like primitive people in any part of the world, the Lotha ancestors were awestruck at the natural phenomena like the regularity of day and night, the stars and planets, the change of seasons and natural forces like the rain and storm, lightning and thunder, earthquakes, wonders of life like birth, growth, hunger, sickness, death and so on which was beyond their understanding and control. These experiences, perhaps, made the primitive Lotha to realize and acknowledge the existence of a supernatural power or being who works behind these natural phenomena. The wonder and fear of the natural phenomena which was beyond their comprehension and control, and the belief in the existence of supernatural beings became the foundation of the Lotha traditional religion.

Thus, the traditional religion of the Lothas can be called animism. Dreaded potency of the unknown or fear is a constant element in Animism. The fear of things invisible which is the natural seed of religion has derived its germinating force from animism. (Clodd, 2007: 48). Edward Clodd further writes about the origin of the concept of the supernatural that the

primitive man, “having once conceived of objects as informed by something corresponding to man’s life and will, realizing therein that there was a distinction between the thing moved and the something that moved it, the idea of a twofold, a seen and unseen, must arise. And in that idea was the germ of the supernatural, which itself had impetus in the fact borne in upon man that he was at the mercy of powers stronger than himself, that crossed his path, that thwarted his schemes, and played havoc with anything to which he clung” (2007:49). Thus, the idea of the existence of the supernatural is conceived, and these supernatural, with their great powers could arouse wrath, calamity, misery and disaster to the people. To restrain them in their anger, appeasement in the form of sacrifices and rituals have to be made from time to time. Here, we cannot ignore the role nature has in the Lotha religion. Nature operates in its different manifestation like the sky, the Earth, the mountain and the water. Religion becomes all the more important to a tribal people who live nearer to nature, and whose life is largely influenced by its overwhelming forces. Religion becomes a part of their life and is interwoven in their socio- religious beliefs and rituals. (Sinha,1977:11).

It is a religion without a name or a definite place of worship, nor a structural set of uniform beliefs or tenets in black and white. Mar Pongener describes the Naga Religion in the following words: “The Naga Traditional religion did not possess any sacred books as norms of authority for the faith and practice of the believers. However, they did have rich heritages of rites and ceremonies, myths and legends, folktales and stories, wisdom and proverbs, forms and practices, mores and morals, customs and traditions which have been handed down orally from generation to generation” (2011:42). This applies to the Lotha traditional religion too. Their religion can be called a religion of life experiences and this, Renty Keitzar calls the “primal Bible” of the Naga traditional religion. (1995:83). The people’s life experiences are dictated by the great fear of the supernatural power and spirits whom they appease. Therefore ,the actual practice of their religion can be easily labeled animism, which Anthropologist Sir

E. B. Tylor defined as a ‘belief in spiritual beings’, or ‘the general Doctrine of souls and other spiritual beings in general’. They appease the Gods and spirits but did not worship any idols. Their worship of certain objects signifies worship of the spirits believed to be abiding there. But, significantly, no matter what God they worshipped they made no attempt to represent the God in carving or in picture.

The primitive religion of the Lothas is endowed with a duality of faith in benevolence and malevolence. The people in fighting against the order of nature believe that all misfortune is caused by the malignant influence of the supernatural, and ultimately they had to make their own philosophy of life which could give them a moral force to fight the various odds of nature, a philosophy which can see a universal role of supernatural in the destiny of man, and which invariably warrants an hierarchy of Gods, Deities and Spirits in shaping their small and big fortunes and prosperity in life. And each of these performs definite functions in its own sphere. (Sinha, 1977:22). Thus, like in Pantheism, the Lothas believe in one supreme God at the top, but there are also subordinate Gods, Deities and spirits below this supreme God.

## THE KINGDOM OF GODS

The kingdom of Gods of the Lothas may be classified into three dimensions, viz ; the Supreme God, the Deities and the Spirits. Different kinds of functions were associated with these supernatural beings, and with these functions the activities of the people are supposed to be efficiently controlled, either malevolently or benevolently. To turn malignancy into benevolency, and to ensure their blessings, invocations in the form of sacrifices and prayers have to be made from time to time.

## The Supreme God

However primitive a religion be, there is concept of Supreme Being. P.T.Philips opines, 'people in every part of the world whether they be white or black, or whether they belong to the east or west, believe that there is a creator of universe. The conception of a supreme being is not borrowed from any other religion, but it is handed down from the ancestors' (1976:37). The Nagas in general believe that the Supreme Being exists above or beyond the sky. Even though they had the concept of the existence of the Supreme being, their idea of creation is vague. It is perhaps a universal characteristic that the tribals are ignorant of their creation.

Much of the Lotha cosmology comes from folktales. Strange story of the creation is told. These tales were told and retold from generation to generation orally. One of the many Lotha legends about the creation is that, in the beginning of time God created the universe and the Earth with mud dough. The Earth was created with artistic and scenic touch, but when God reached the Lotha country it was already dark and God was tired so the remaining roll of the mud dough became the hills and mountains. (Interview with P. Ngully, Niroyo village. 12-04-13). Having being tired, he leveled the plains of Assam without purposeful design like the valley, rivers and the mountains of the Naga hills (Murry,1976:3). There is another Lotha folktale about the heavenly God who created the Earth and allowed the people to live there. One day, the God called upon the people, but they could not respond because they were having a feast. So a tree named '*tsungsitong*' responded. The Heavenly God blessed the tree to live long and cursed the people to live short. (Lotha,1993:55).

The Lotha stories of creation are vague which shows that they did not have a clear concept of creation. In fact, it matters little for this people how the universe was created. Perhaps they did not want to involve themselves into the indubitable argument, but believed



essentially in the God whom they regard as an embodiment of all pervasiveness and all consciousness. “Creation was unfathomable, something beyond their comprehension and understanding and the Lotha ancestors did not ponder about it too much for if they do so they may go mad”.(Interview with M.odyuo. Yikhum village. 10.10.2012). An unreliable source of creation story, no doubt, but they have the idea of the supreme God, the creator. Even though they do not clearly say about the creation of the Earth or heaven, the Lothas have the idea of pre- existent Supreme Being, the Creator. Since God is infinite and our minds can only conceptualize the finite, humanity has no access to knowledge of the supreme reality. The creation of the universe, the supreme reality was perhaps beyond the comprehension of the primitive Lothas.

The supreme God of the Lothas is *potsow*. (This word was later adopted by the pioneer missionaries to represent the Christian God). This word is the expression of the highest being they could ever conceive. The Lotha *potsow* is a supernatural being, an object of worship, the creator, the sustainer and the controller of the universe (Anglo- Lotha dictionary). *Potsow* is also addressed by the Lothas as *Apo* (father). It also mean *po* (father) *tsow* (Great), the Great father. Unlike the Angami, who attributed a feminine term *pfu* or *ukepenuopfu* meaning ‘our mother’, ‘birth spirit’ or ‘ancestress’ ( Roy,2004:7), the Lotha *Apo* perhaps reflects the patriarchal society of the Lothas, where the eldest male member heads and commands the highest authority and respect. Thus, it may be to show that *Potsow* is the eldest and the greatest of them all.

The abode of the *potsow* is in the highest heaven or sky. He is the God Par excellence of the primitive Lothas and often referred to as the ‘high God’. The concept of a ‘ high God’ who lives in the ‘highest heaven’ or ‘sky’ gives one the impression that he is distant and transcendent, so much so that He is not involved with people. He is very remote from the everyday concerns of ordinary people. To substantiate their idea of a ‘high God’ the Lothas

believe that the *potsow* rarely comes down to visit the people. Even if He does so, nobody is supposed to see him because for a Lotha “to see *potsow* is to die”. (Mills,1922:113). The Lothas also has a folk story which says that there was a time when the sky, where *potsow* dwelt was so near that the people decided to built a tower with the intention of reaching his abode. This angered God and made the men to speak different languages so that they could not co-ordinate their activities. Thereafter, God withdrew to the present distance. (Nzan Tsopoe, Sungro Village. Interviewed: 5:10:2010).

The remoteness and transcendent nature of the Lotha *potsow* can also be explained by the lack of ritual observances for the Supreme Being. Since he is uninvolved with the everyday life of the people, the rituals people offer do not concern him much. Like the Lotha *potsow*, with any other primitive people, the Supreme being is generally spoken of as being “existing beyond the firmament too exalted to be contaminated by the affairs of the ordinary people”. (Hardon, vol-1,1968:54). The Lotha *potsow* is the supreme spirit who rules over lesser spirits and deities, who governs the natural forces, created men, souls and all other things in the universe. He is the supernatural power surpassing the understanding and comprehension of the primitive Lothas, and therefore the feeling of duty, honor and reverence towards him. He was the first cause and creator of the world. He has a pre- eminent place in the universe, as the universe depends on him. This pre-eminence makes him greater than any creature, spirit or man. The greatness of this God makes him mysterious and incomprehensible. No one is able to see him, know him or understand his nature. This also explains why the Lotha *potsow* is not represented by a figure, idol or image to honor him, but he is seen as the one directing every moment of their life. Thus, the Lothas calls him *potsow* which is explained in the Anglo- Lotha Dictionary “object of worship, creator, sustainer and controller of the universe”.

The primitive Lotha experience the Supreme Being as the benevolent God who, though at a distance, exercised overall control over everything in the world and had true concern for people's welfare. Thus the Lothas say that "He pours down rain and hail stones from his large reservoir above. He protects his children when the evil spirits, when angry with the children of men sometimes determines to destroy them by hurling down great blocks of ice. At such times *potsow* rushes from his abode and seizing the huge door of his dwelling raises it above his head and goes rushing hither and thither crying, *a honoro nzana vana, a honoro nzana vana*. (show my chickens favor, show my chickens favor), and the block of ice falling upon this door are dashed to pieces and fall to the earth as hail" (Witter, 1886:94). This brings out the benevolent and protective nature of the *potsow*, who has true concern for his people, the *Apo* (father), who protects his children. The Lothas again indicate their faith in his benevolency by saying that he is not in need of their offerings and sacrifices. Offerings and sacrifices were thus done mainly to propitiate the malevolent spirits. But in all the significant moment of their life the Lothas took recourse to the Supreme Being rather than to inferior deities. In the course of the day, they frequently pronounced the name of *potsow*, in the *ethan tsopho* (eating of the first fruit or rice) they offer to the *potsow* first, in the face of danger they call on *potsow*, in gain and benefit they attribute it to *potsow*, in death they call on *potsow* to have pity on them.

This omniscient God of the Lothas could see and hear anything. Hence, it was not only during feasts and ceremonies that they invoke *potsow*. In course of their daily life they would murmur a prayer to the supreme God. When they begin to eat, they would throw a bit of rice to one side saying, "*potsow*, eat first". When someone lies or boasts too much, someone may say 'don't tell such lies, potsow hears and will punish us'. (Zantsemo Ngullie, N.Longidang village, interviewed,10:10:2013). Considered as a benevolent God and the author of good, *potsow* did not need sacrifices or appeasement but they offer their festivities to him as an

expression of thanksgiving and prayer for protection from natural calamities. This omniscient, omnipresent but transcendent and distant Lotha *potsow* rarely visits the Earth, and the person who sees *potsow* would die. (Witter,1886:95). He visits the humans on earth from time to time lodging with the village seer ( *Ratsen*). *Potsow* sends his servants to the *ratsen* ahead of time to announce his visit and to prepare the seer, then he comes down with a train of attendants with articles symbolical of the fate of the village that year. No one except the *ratsen* should see God. To receive *Potsow*, the *ratsen* was required to observe some taboos (*sari sapvu*). He must not go out of the village land, nor kill any animals in his house, indulge in sexual intercourse or eat the flesh of anything killed after he received the alert. In honour of the God's visit, the whole village should rest for a day called *Mongtsu Emung*, a genna day or no work day. This God is understood in anthropomorphic form and character,as the Lothas also address him as *Apo* ( father), who lives in the sky, and who cares for them. He was the provider and the sustainer. He sustains the universe by giving rain and sun, and blesses people with health and fertility and life. His supremacy over all Earthly Godlings is recognized.

### The Deities

The deities are the supernatural powers commonly propitiated and supplicated to for most of the worldly things. A reference to the supreme God *Potsow* can be made only in times of crisis or as an appeal against the deities. When everything else failed, then only the supreme God was appealed, who was the judge of all, and to him, human turned during despair. (Longchar, 1991:7). The deities, since they guide most of the phases of human activity, are supposed to be closer to man. They exercise a closer influence over their destiny. (Sinha,1977:55). Often many names are used to refer to these groups of spirits. They are known as nature spirits, mythological figures, demigods and deities.

For the agricultural people like the Lothas whose subsistence depended on the produce of the Jhum cultivation, *Ronsü* hold important position among the deities. *Ronsü* is the Lord of crops who has control over the harvest of the year. He was the God of prosperity, success and good fortune. He blesses people with material success in life. Therefore, throughout the agricultural year, prayers and sacrifices were made to this Godling. *Ronsü Etsa* (summoning prosperity) is the most important sacrifice made to this deity. No one has ever seen one or knows what one is like to look at but the Lothas agree that *Ronsü* appears in the form of insects like bees, frogs and dragonfly etc, his abode being the fields and granaries. In his presence humans should not behave or speak irreverently lest he will be hurt (Murry, 1976:4). To ensure his blessings, he is to be appeased by way of sacrifices from time to time.

The ceremony of *Ronsü Etsa* (summoning prosperity) takes place when the rice began to sprout, and before the season of thunderstorm sets in, lest the thunder would prevent the *Ronsü* the God of prosperity from hearing the voices of those calling him. The ritual was conducted by the *pvüti* (priest) who kills a pig in his house, and taking a bamboo mat, some of the meat, an egg, a chicken and a little rice goes with the whole village to the outskirts of the village. The chicken is killed and omens are taken by watching how the excreta fall. Then the egg and forty (40) tiny pieces of the meat are laid on the ground where the *pvüti* has already placed bamboo sticks in the form of a square. Then a prayer is offered to *Ronsü* the deity of the crops, by calling out the names of all the villages, extinct and existing, for *Ronsü* to come and bless them with good harvest. The villagers then hold out their baskets on the ground calling out to *Ronsü* to fill them. The baskets were held as if someone were pouring rice into them, which they cover quickly with a cloth. All go home in single file with much grunting as if they were carrying heavy loads, then reaching their granaries, usually located at the outskirts of the village they carefully pour the imaginary rice in their baskets into the granaries.



It is *sari sapvii* (taboo) to speak ill of this Godling, for failure to control one's tongue will bring failure during harvest. When harvest begins, the presence of this deity is again invoked, the owner of the field would go to the field before daybreak that they may meet *Ronsü*, which would bring good harvest, make fire and call out his name to southward, northward, east and west so that he may come to his field with plenty of harvest. (Mozhui,2004:16).

The deity who reigns over the wild life of the forest and protects them is known as *Sukhyingo*. Hunters and trappers may have good game if they have his favor. Sometimes he is seen as a small man and heard calling out to the wild animals in the jungle, but seeing or hearing him is not a favorable omen. *Sukhyingo* is believed to have a twisted head, and whose side he inclined was supposed to be fortunate and have blessings of animals. Considered as a benevolent deity he had concern for the well-being of the people. He not only looks after the well being of the wild animals and cattle wealth of the people but is also responsible for human destiny. Folktales of the Lothas says that whoever was not satisfied or contented with whatever *Sukhyingo* gave or complained, his blessings would be taken back, or would not get the next blessing. (Mozhui,2004:17). To be boastful of the prey or to despise it will prevent further blessings from *Sukhyingo*.

The Lotha *Sukhingo* is interpreted as destiny, good fortune, whatever came by chance or luck, a prediction of one's future, success, great accumulation of wealth. (Anglo-Lotha Dictionary). It also meant soul, spirit or destiny attached to every individual. Therefore, to have the favor of this Godling is important.

*Oki sukhyingo* (house destiny) was the ambivalent spirit of the house. It was believed that this deity was like a man in appearance but has enormously long fingers and spotted all over. He was considered as an invisible deity but some men in delirium claimed to have seen him. (Interview with Churhon Murry, Wokha Village who claims to have seen this deity).

Being ambivalent, due respect should be given to keep him in good temper lest he could be harmful. To receive his blessing, respect was to be shown to him.

Another important deity of the Lothas is the *Ngazo* whose abode was the deep jungle. He was the jungle spirit, and the people owed their material benefits to this divine giver. He is identical with *Sukhyingo* in appearance but while *Sukhyingo* was the protector of animals, *Ngazo* was an agricultural God in whose favor people would receive a large harvest. The Lothas believed that *Ngazo* may be hurt by a little mistake in words, one should not speak ill of these God for failure to control one's tongue will bring failure during the harvest. (Mozhui,2004:16). *Ngazo* literally means "expanse" or "galaxy". (Anglo- Lotha Dictionary). This points to belief in the natural powers exercising control over humanity or human destiny. Here, the Lotha religion appears to have an element of Naturism, even though it may not be very explicit as that of the Vedic religion where the whole of nature was personified and worshipped. The universe, the expanse of the galaxy was beyond the comprehension of the Lotha and they were filled with awe and wonder and reverence, which perhaps caused them to conceive of a deity *Ngazo*. (Interview with Nzan Tsopoe. Sungro. 15.09.12).

*Ngazo* and *Sukhyingo* were two deities of the Lothas who were responsible for human destiny. They were powers at work throughout the whole life of the humans. Like the *Atua* of the Maori, the Polynesian tribal people who believe in power at work throughout the whole of life of the humans which they call *Atua*( Brown,1973:37), the Lothas believe that both the Godling affected their life in both good ways and bad ways. They gave greatness or powers and unlimited blessing like the expanse of the sky to a person, family or tribe. For this reason, the Lothas believed it was very important to respect them and try to please them all the time. In fact, in all the rites and rituals and ceremonies throughout the agricultural year the presence of *Ngazo* and *Sukhyingo* were invoked first.

The deity of rivers and streams of the Lothas was *jupvuo*.( *ju*-water,*pvuo*-master). He was the divinity that had control of the rivers and everything that live in it. His appearance was like a man with hair of enormous length. His abode was the bottom of the deep pools and used human skulls as hearth stones. The Lothas believe that *Jupvuo* inhabited the deep pool in the Doyang river located at Morakjo village called *Jupvuo Ezhu*. To appease this deity, small offerings were made to him after the *oyantssoa* ceremony, before the fields are cut for the next year's cultivation. Another ceremony called *phyotsso* is performed in honor of *Jupvuo* by the *pvuti* (priest) accompanied by all the grown- up men of the community. A bird hunt is organized, and when one has been caught alive all go down to the Doyang River. On the bank the *pvuti* kills a hen and lays out ten scraps of its flesh on his up-stream hand for *Jupvuo* and nine scrapes on his down-stream hand. A miniature raft of bamboos is made, on which put an egg, a little cotton and the live bird are tied by the leg. The raft is then allowed to float down-stream. If it upsets it is a bad omen and it is believed that someone will be drowned during the term of office of the *pvuti*.( Mills,1922:125).It is believed that *jupvuo* bless anyone he would like to bless and drive away all the fishes for someone he does not favor.

Just as any other tribal people, the Lothas also have an abundance of folk tales with supernatural beings and animals and birds for character. One such folk tale connected with *Jupvuo*, the deity of the water is narrated as follows. One day a boy went down to the Doyang river for fishing. As he did not return when evening came his parents became very worried. The next morning his father took some men and went down to search for the boy, but he was nowhere to be found. The father was very saddened and did not give up searching hoping to find at least the dead body of the boy. As he walked on, he saw a hair lying on the path and he picked it up thinking it may have belonged to his son. But then he found that the hair was very long and he was holding only one end of it. He walked on winding the hair on round and round his finger. In this way he went on and on until he had passed eight bends of the river,

such was the length of the hair. At last the hair brought him to the water spirit *Jupvuo*, for it was the hair of the water spirit which he had forgotten to wind round his head. When *Jupvuo* felt someone pulling his hair, he was infuriated and screamed: “Let me go!”, but the man replied: “you have captured my son and kept him at your home in the water. I will not let you go till you bring him back to me!”. At this the water spirit replied: “let me go and I shall bring your son and leave him here tomorrow morning when people go to the fields”. If you do not believe me I shall swear the most solemn oath known to men “. Hearing this, the man let the water spirit go and *Jupvuo* gave the man a dried fish, a fresh fish and some fish paste as gift of friendship. The man went the next morning at the time when the villagers go to the fields and there, sure enough, was his son on the river bank, safe and sound. Then the boy narrated to his father: “I saw a big fish and dived in quickly and caught it by its neck. But the fish dragged me down, deep into a pool under the rocks. Inside the rock there was a cave, in which there was no water. There on the dry sand was a hearth made of three white human skulls. It was the lair of the water spirit”. The father was very happy that *jupvuo* had not hurt the boy and had brought him out and left him on the river bank as he had promised. The father and the son happily walked back home. The tale is remembered till today. (Translated from *Kyong Erang Motsu Ejoma*, (some Lotha folk tales) Ngullie, 1984: 11)

### The evil Spirits

The last in the hierarchal order of the supernatural powers are the spirits called *tsungrham* (evil spirits). These spirits were basically malevolent in nature and play an important role in the Lotha belief. *Tsungrham* are invisible spirits who were mostly ill-disposed towards men, and are supposed to lurk in every corner looking out for opportunity to attack them and do some substantial harm, causing diseases and sometimes even death. They

were to be dreaded for their capacity of doing harm. These evil spirits detain the soul of those who visit their abode causing illness, and so a Lotha when sick usually attributes his illness to the malice of '*tsungrham*'. To get cured and avert death, an elaborate rites and rituals were to be carried out through the advice of the *ratsen* (village seer or medicine man), and *montsae* (caller of spirits). Folktales declare that the spirits are seen in ponds, caves, groves, dense jungle and mountains and also outside the villages. Believed to have a shadowy form they assume forms of human beings, animals, plants and inanimate objects.

According to tradition, the first among these *tsungrham* was *Khyuham* (house spirit), who persecuted the Lotha ancestors by eating their children and carrying the skulls of his victims about in a basket on his back. (Mills,1922:116). The Lothas believed that this harmful spirit stayed in every house so children were not left alone in the house without a *ngaro epvui* (sitter or caretaker) lest they were eaten by this spirit. (Interview with Nyimtsemo Ezung, N. Longidang.10.09.13). *Rankhanda*, one of the ancestors of the Lothas managed to shut him up in a hole in the earth. Thereafter, a yearly ceremony was observed called *Epo Etha* by the Lothas to ward off the evil influence of *Khyuham*. The ritual is done by killing a dog and the paws and nose were cooked with ginger and offered to the spirit. The rest of the meat was eaten to be eaten by the *montsae* (caller of spirit).

Ra- Mon (spirit of the jungle) is another malevolent spirit or *tsungrham*. This spirit was supposed to inhabit the deepest forest, and was believed to be very harmful. Phyopio Ngulli of Niroyo village, who claimed to have encountered the Ramon spirit on one of his hunting trips, likened him to a giant with enormously long hair and long nails and flying like a giant bird with booming shouts. (Interviewed 15.10.13). Whenever this spirit shouts no one should reply or shout back, for he tears people with his long nails and devour them.



*Tsungrham Eyimo* (mad spirit) is the most cruel among the malevolent spirits and considered to have no mercy at all, and could not be appeased by any means. When diseases could not be cured by the *ratsen* and *montsae*, the Lothas believed that the soul of the sick person was already detained by the *tsungrham eyimo*. Even sacrifice of a dog, which was the last resort, does not cure the sickness if it is caused by the malice of this spirit.

*Yan mon* (spirit of the village) was the spirit of village and was believed to roam through the village at night. Anyone who ventures out at night when everyone had gone to sleep, dreaded to meet this malevolent spirit who had the capacity to cause even death. Therefore, after dark the villagers go out in groups, but only in cases of emergency so as to avoid meeting this spirit.

*Li mon* (spirit of fields) is believed to be less dangerous than the other spirits, and believed to lurk in the fields after dark. Anyone who sleeps in the field can see or hear this spirit. Since he is less malevolent he does not require sacrifices or offering.

The Lothas believed that the dense jungle was haunted by fairies called *Longkomvu*. These spirits are supposed to be heard murmuring on the side of the village path and the fields and tempt people to follow them, and lead them to gorges and steep mountains and make them mad. The victims are often found dead on the steep hills or in a hilarious state in the thick jungles. These spirits are believed to live in deep misty groves and big rocks. They had a form of men but small in size and short stature, with their feet and hands pointed backwards. People could hear them speaking but could not understand. These wailing fiends roam in groups. Propitiation and appeasement in the form of sacrifices and rituals was not given as the spirits were less harmful, but care was to be taken not to roam alone to avoid meeting this spirit. There are stories that speak of these spirits playing the naughty game of calling people's names and confusing them. If a person is taken away by this spirit, the relatives and friends had to go to the jungle and rocky gorges and misty groves calling out loudly the name

of the victim, the spirit then release them saying that the people were too noisy. It is believed that these fairies sleep during day and are awake at night, and for them even land is steep and steep land is even. Incidentally, the Lothas tell stories that persons taken away by these spirits are found on steep gorges, in a condition of trance or madness.

Thus, in the Lotha cosmology, there is a hierarchy of Gods, deities and spirits who rule over mankind. Raghuvir Sinha while observing the religion of the North East India writes; “ The God Supreme above, with a descending hierarchical order of subordinate deities and the vast humanity below surrendering their destiny to this all omnipotent, all supernatural force, forms the fundamental concept of all beliefs in most tribal religions. Each of the God or deity has a kind of dominion status under the sovereignty of the supreme God”. (1977:50). The Lotha traditional religion seems to give this concept its maximum expression. Each of the deities is responsible for a particular phase of human endeavor in the total mass of activities. As mentioned above, some of them are essentially malevolent and some are benevolent in nature. The deities and spirits were in turn controlled by the Supreme God who reigns above them and is the higher master of both the human and the unseen worlds. For peaceful living, the spiteful or harmful spirits were to be appeased through propitiations, which are made by way of rituals performed from time to time. The usual ritual was to offer fowls of which the head, feet and entrails were offered to the spirits with prayers and incantations offered by the priest. If they are neglected, their wrath may be aroused and cause some catastrophe. Therefore, every effort has to be taken to secure the blessing of the supernatural powers.

It is however to be noted that appeasement was not necessarily worship, but it was practiced in order to ward off the wrath of the malevolent spirits. The primitive life was unsanitary and the body easily yielded to sickness, ailment or suffering, but the people failed to understand that the causes of these were due to diseases or germs. Hence, they normally assumed that misery was caused to them by a malevolent spirit, thus motivating them to make

appeasement. (Partridge, 2007:116). This belief in the benevolent and malevolent influence seems to be based on the general principle of the world order which divides all things and all human order in the universe into good and evil, virtue and vice, good will and ill will, black and white. The primitive Lotha extremely fear the evil spirits. His life was guided by fear. This made him to live an honest and sincere life.

## THE RITUALISTIC COMPONENT OF THE LOTHAS RELIGION

Religion of the pre- literate Lotha society knows no religious code, no constitution, no religious injunctions and no ethical prescriptions in black and white. Their religion was transmitted from generation to generation through tradition, as part of their culture. The primitive Lotha recognizes the role of spirits in influencing his life malignantly. These spirits are not well disposed towards humanity unless propitiated properly and to ensure their blessing, invocations in the form of prayers and sacrifices have to be made from time to time. These turn malignancy into benevolency. These beliefs made the Lotha traditional religion integrated to a large network of rituals which develop around an elaborate ceremonial. The deities and spirits were supposed to be appeased by such ceremonials.

Two basic component of primitive religion is belief and rituals. Mere beliefs cannot constitute religion. They basically depended upon rites which bring conformity with nature. The worship of God in the ceremonial sense, like having his image in a place like Temple and paying obsequence to it was not prevalent among the Lothas. Instead rites and rituals were widely practiced. These rituals and ceremonies were supervised by certain important officials who thus had a significant place in the Lotha community. Some of them were meant for individuals and families, while others were for the community as a whole. The Lotha rituals vary from simple acts linked with everyday activities like hunting, gardening, fishing, to

complex rituals, festivals and festival cycles lasting days and even weeks. The mithun ( *Bos frontalis*), pig, dog and birds like the fowl figures in many of these rituals and festival ceremonies. Food, drink and sexual taboos accompany all the important rituals.

## THE RELIGIOUS OFFICIALS

The socio- religious complex of these people involved the presence of an intermediary priest- the *Pvüiti*. The priest was selected for the post, not because of his hereditary status or any privileged position, but on account of some special qualities believed to be inherent in him and which are supposed to enable him to discharge the delicate ritualistic duties. He is consulted on all important occasion of the village, private or communal, social or religious. Due to his vast social and religious duties, the priest was indispensable for the village community. The most suitable man becomes *pvüiti* (priest) by force of character. He directs all public ceremonies in the villages and fixes the days on which they would be held. The office of the *pvüiti* is not hereditary as in other tribes, but anyone who is qualified for the job, and has the necessary constitution of mind and fitness of the body can become a priest. Thus a Lotha *Pvüiti* should have the following qualities or standards: the man in the village who has observed most social gennas is chosen he must belong to one of the clans who have provided *pvütis* for that village in the past, he must never have been wounded by an enemy or wild animals, or have hurt himself by falling from a tree or rock, or have burnt himself, he must not have any physical deformity or mutilation. He must not be an illegitimate child, should be well versed in all religious rules and regulations. These are studied and analyzed by the council members and the best was selected. At the death of the *pvüiti*, the old men of the village discussed the question of his successor. The successor must perform the *oyantssoa* ceremony. The *pvüiti* once chosen holds office for life. The sole charge on which he can be

dismissed is that of deliberately uttering curses instead of blessings at ceremonies. He is forbidden to go outside the village, lest he should fall into the hands of enemies and be killed.

The main duty of the *pvüti* is to perform sacrifices, keep the up to date procedures of the village yearly observances. He is the custodian of the village calendar. He declares all public *Emungs* (holidays). The community festival dates were fixed by him. He opens the agricultural year by performing the seed sowing ceremony. He also begins the harvest of all crops. On behalf of the village, he prays to the supreme God for his blessing of crops and harvest, increase of population, cattle to multiply and no epidemic to enter the villages.

The *pvüti* was assisted by the *yingae* appointed by the council of elders. The *yingae* (servant or assistant) was chosen from poor family or an orphan, and is appointed for life. He accompanied the *pvüti* in all ceremonies and carries his load. He receives a share of the meat at all gennas and a share of rice from each year's collection. In times of illness of the *pvüti*, the *yingae* could perform the ceremonies as if he were the *pvüti*.

*Vukjong* (the one who pierce the pig or pig killer), was another assistant of the priest. He accompanies the priest in all the religious rituals and ceremonies. His duty was to kill animals at private sacrifices. In some villages, more than one *vukjung* is appointed to assist the *pvüti*.

Below the *vukjung* are two *nchuko* (hearth bringer), who bring the small stones with which miniature hearths are made at social 'gennas'. (Mills, 1922:126)

*Sorhon* or meat divider was supposed to set up the meat at all sacrifices and settle all disputes as to the respective share.

No one may act as *vukjung*, *nchuko* or *sorhon* unless he has performed all social 'gennas' and dragged a stone. There is nothing to prevent the offices of *pvüti*, *vukjung*, *nchuko* and *sorhon* being combined in the same person.



## RESPECTING THE SACRED: THE TABOO COMPLEX

All social and religious activities in a tribal society are not only based upon some supernatural beliefs and universal principles, but they also seem to follow some ethical code of conduct. Moreover, they are regulated by a certain social restraints which assume a kind of socio- religious sanctity. The social restraints may be not be rigid or be liable for breach. There is no control over man's mind and actions following from it, and therefore, the socio-religious restraints have to be given a religious coating. And it is believed that the supernatural force above always looks after this, and those who break these rules are punished by the supernatural beings. This improvised system operates in society in the form of 'taboo'. Literally, taboo means a forbidden activity, something which is not permitted, something which stands against social approval and is disallowed by norms of behavior. (Sinha, 1977:104-105). The word is derived from '*tabu*', a Polynesian expression which is used to describe something that is forbidden, as it is considered sacred or as it is something that defiles that which is sacred.

The Lothas used the term 'taboo' in two sense, viz; *sari sapvu*, meaning forbidden or prohibited activity, and *sari emvu* meaning profane or to show contempt. What is believed to be the 'taboo' is full of sacred powers. At times, however, people or things are considered taboo because they are believed to be essentially evil. People dying of accidents, women dying of childbirth, or anything involving blood are taboo, and they are to be avoided not because they are sacred but because of the *myok* (evil fate) associated with it. The Lothas also considered some places and things as taboo. For instance certain part of the jungle, certain trees, certain fruits, birds or animals are *sari sapvu*. This taboo *sari sapvu* concept perhaps helped the Lotha villages to preserve certain birds, fruits and animals. In the places which are considered taboo, profane activities are forbidden. An example is the Lotha field hut. It is

forbidden to bring raw meat of any kind into the field hut, or kill anything or have sexual intercourse in it. This is why the approaches to the field- houses near paths are often ‘panjied’ as a gentle reminder to passers- by that they must not run in to shelter from the rain if they are carrying raw meat (Mills,1922: 48).

Among the Lothas, the taboo complex is an effective tool to control social behavior and also surrounded all the ritualistic performances. It is the ‘taboo’ which prompts the individual to remain in a regulated behavior. It also reminds him of the supernatural force and be afraid of its fury.

The first taboo that is important among the Lothas as in all societies of the world is the incest taboo. It is considered a taboo for intermarriage within a clan. Such practices are considered incest and results in the loss of generation in that particular clan. (Interview with Nyimtsemo Ezung. N. Longidang village. 20:05:2013). In situation such as this, the persons involved were made to pay fine. They were exterminated from the clan because the Lotha believed that such acts incapacitates, blinds, handicaps and invites evil spirits in normal life. “The fine was usually a live pig, the length of which equals five measures of the hand stretched from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the middle finger, and a full grown cow which has a fully developed horns”. (Interview with Churhon murry, wokha village,10:01:2013). The meat was to be divided among the clan but eaten only by the elders since the meat was considered a taboo. The strictest form of incest is sexual relationship between father and daughter, mother and son, and between brother and sister. Such relationship was unthinkable in the Lotha society, and any breach of this taboo is punishable by social law, and also punishment from the supernatural. The violation were strictly punishable not only by the village council but by the whole village community. Sometimes they were punished to the extent of extermination from society or village community.

Use of offensive languages, curses and expression of anger and violence in the presence of the maternal uncles was a taboo, illegitimate child were placed at the lowest rung of the society. Such individuals and those of the refugees and immigrants were not given status of leadership in the society because they were considered to bring infamy, division and betrayal to the village community. A delivering mother giving birth to twins was regarded a taboo. People were forbidden to enter their house and have relation with the couple. Seeds for cultivation in the fields were not to be shared with the couple. (Ngullie, 1994: 26.)

The Lothas also observe certain food taboos. Elephant meat is not eaten, as the person who eats it will become clumsy as it has difficulty in moving freely. Thus eating of its meat was a taboo. Bears are considered as dumb animals. It was assumed that this same dumbness shows up in the children of people who eat its flesh. It is taboo to eat tiger meat. It is taboo to eat the anteater, for its scaly hide and ugly appearance or deformity may show up in the offspring of the people. The large freshwater catfish is taboo for human consumption since the Lothas believe that the catfish was turned from a human. Eels and sheep are forbidden for they believe that eating their meat would cause the graying and whitening of hairs. Birds like crows are not eaten. They make people steal and caught easily for their crimes. Eagles and hawks are not eaten, they tend to make people addicted to meat and make people produce excessive saliva in humans. The meat of Vultures and other scavengers were taboo. The meat of Rhinos was a taboo because of the belief that its consumption make people to die in the hands of enemies. The ugly look of owls was believed to appear in the offspring of the eaters of its meat. Wild cats are not eaten fearing for the well being of the fields. Its consumption results in people landing up in all kinds of troubles and mischief. Flying squirrels are believed to cause people into illicit relation, sexual imbalances and disloyalty among the people. The brains of cows, pigs, dogs or other animals are not to be eaten by children. The flesh of monkeys is *sari sapvu (taboo)* for women because it was believed that if a woman indulges in

these foods, the consumption of rice will be extravagant and the store quickly used up. The flesh of the He – goat is taboo for the women for fear that they may acquire the lecherous propensities of the goat.

It is *sari sapvu* for a snake to cross the path of a raiding party. In such a case, the party postpones the trip to another day. Using three stones to make a hearth was taboo for a Lotha household because such was to be used only during religious rituals. It is taboo to mesh a ginger, and when eaten it is chewed only while turning to the side. (Interview with Thungdamo Ezung (65), animist, Longsa village 05:07:13). This is because ginger is considered as an infallible antidote against evil spirits and used by the Lothas in all their rituals.

Almost all the ritualistic ceremonies of the Lothas were accompanied or followed by taboo observances, which involves the *pvüti*, the households performing the ritual and the whole community in case of community rites. In most rituals, especially those involving the whole community like the *oyantssoa* ceremony and the *pikhuchak* ritual, the *pvüti* was required to go into prayer and abstain from taking certain food which operates from a day to , in some cases ten days. A couple who perform the *poniratsen* have to observe socio- religious taboo for few days. They are not supposed to come out of their house as long as the taboo lasts and thus have to store their needs in advance. A mother giving birth has to observe house taboo, a household which had faced unnatural death of one of its member, had to observe a taboo. This taboo prohibits the inmates of the house accepting a drink outside or accepting any social invitation from the people of the village. The flesh of animals killed at the funeral of such victims is taboo. Sometimes, when the situation calls for, the whole village was kept under taboo. During the taboo period the villagers have to remain strictly within the bounds of the village. In the most important rituals, it is necessary to keep the whole village under taboo so long as the ritual continues. No one is allowed to leave the village and no outsiders are

supposed to enter or trespass the village, lest it invites the wrath of the supernatural powers. Therefore, to avoid the wrath of the supernatural, and to let the village community remain under the ritualistic sanctity the whole village community is kept under taboo.

There is ritualistic taboo which applies only for the cattle of the house and not to people. After the ritual is performed, the cattle of the house cannot be sold or exchanged for a certain period. The agricultural taboo complex holds a special significance. The agricultural rituals were performed by the *pvüiti*, immediately after which an agricultural taboo comes into enforcement. The field falls under taboo. All entry to or through the field was strictly forbidden when the villagers were observing the *Emung* or genna. Total suspension of all activity followed most of the rituals. In all the rituals sexual taboo was observed. The least negligence on their part to observe the taboo can put them in great peril, and the very motive of their ritual may thus be foiled. The taboos served as a regulative ethical code or a kind of defense mechanism to maintain solidarity of the society and also to maintain the sanctity of the ceremonials.

## THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC RITUALS

Primitive societies all over the world are known to have evolved elaborate rites and rituals which were connected to their socio- economic life. The Lotha tribe who lived in isolation on these mountainous tracts of land, uninfluenced by Hinduism or Christianity, strongly believed in the validity and power of ceremonials. They developed rites and rituals which were generally accompanied by small elaborate ceremonials which marked the personal or social event. Thus there were rites connected with birth of a child, naming of the child, first food given to the child, initiation into puberty and adolescent, marriage, various economic activities and other social rituals.

## AGRIULTURE RITUALS

Since Agriculture was the primary economic occupation of the Lothas, the people developed an elaborate ceremonials connected to agriculture, which continuous throughout the agricultural year. With the Lothas all agriculture was in the form of shifting cultivation or Jhum cultivation, which was an arduous activity spread over a number of months and divided into a number of phases, beginning with choosing of the tract of land ,cutting and clearing, burning, sowing, weeding and harvesting. Agriculture of this type involved hard labor and therefore it necessitates corporate activity, involving the whole family, clan, khel and village. For the Lothas, the ceremonials starts from the beginning of the jhum season until it finally culminates with their biggest festival, the *Tokhu Emong* (harvest genna).

The beginning of the agricultural year was marked by a ceremony called the *Pikhvuchak* (separating the fence) which was supposed to be performed before the clearing of the tract started. The Lothas had no knowledge of calendar, so they counted the season according to their yearly returns of the *pikhvuchak* rituals. Thus one calendar year is from the last year *pikhvuchak* to the next *pikhvuchak*, or from the month of the start of cultivation to the month of the next year of cultivation. “”Even the children’s ages were counted in that way and records were kept by adding a twig of stick at the start of every agricultural season”. (Interview with Myanbeni Ezung, Wokha Town,10:08:2012)). All agriculture was supposed to be controlled and guided by a Deity known as *Ronsu* (prosperity). He was the functional God for agriculture. He exercises his control right from the sowing of seeds to the reaping of crops and protects it from the ravages of the wild animals and pests. He also safeguards them against all natural calamities. *Ronsu* of the Lothas was supposedly an essentially benevolent Deity who bestows prosperity to them. Therefore, to ensure the favor of the *Ronsu* and to reap

a good harvest, offerings were to be made from time to time. Thus, during the *pikhuchak* ceremony, the *pvüiti* invokes the blessing of this Deity.

The *Pikhvuchak* ritual commences after the *pvüiti* announced the day on which the ceremony is to be, and every *chumpo* (bachelor's dormitory) buys meat and the cock which is to be sacrificed. On the night before the “genna” sexual taboo is observed. On the day all men of the village assemble at the place where the *ophya* (wooden post) is set up. In front of the *ophya* the *pvüiti* (priest) sets up a miniature *ophya*, and puts an egg on the ground with a leaf on each side. On the leaf to his right he puts ten little bits of pork and ten little bits of ginger, and on that to his left nine little bits of each. He then recites the prayer holding the cock in his left hand, and a dao (machete) in his right. The prayer goes as follows for which a free English translation is given:

*okum nzu ehen chaksoi sia, ethani rheyiaka,*

Let one season go and another one come, we are separating them,

*Nzu eheni berup tssakong, chuso raso, tsushak hanshak, vara vari, joshi kheshi lichho tssona,*

Let death, pestilence, misfortunes and accidents, if there were,

*Ezhu mpong na hana yitoksi,*

Let the wind take it away,

*Okum nzu ethani e- mhayikhelo,*

Bless us with a new season,

*Leko, penchu nichu, e- mhayikhelo*

Bless us with fertile Earth, good grain and harvest,

*Sukhying ngazo, harishi e- mhayikhelo.*

Bless us with prosperity, good health and life for all.

The prayer being ended the *pvüiti* cuts the cock's throat, takes the omens from its entrails and ties it on to the miniature *ophya*. The old men sit down and eat some of the meat



which the boys from the *chumpo*s have bought and all go back to the village with much chanting. Parties of boys walk singing six times round each *chumpo*. The rest of the day is given up to feasting.

The day after the ritual a *genna* or *Emung* was observed. It was a rest day, which forbids all villagers to enter or pass through the field. No one goes to the field but for a group of boys and few old men who were supposed to go on a mock head hunting raid. On the same spot, the old men sets up a miniature *ophya* and make the same offerings of an egg, meat and ginger. Then the group go to the jungle and perform the mock raid throwing spears and shouting at make believe enemies. Then they return to the *chumpo*. The performance of the mock head raid incidentally was supposed to ensure good crops, successful hunting, fertility and high birth- rate to the village.

With this ritual and the *Emung* being completed the individual families could begin the clearing of the jungle, but not before proper propitiation is given to the *Leko potsow* (Earth God) and omens taken. This ritual is called *Leko nano*. Here the *pviiti*, along with the *yingae* carry out the offering of a pig. “A pig is killed, cleaned and the entrails are removed after cutting open the stomach. Then the whole pig is taken to the outskirts of the village by the priest with the help of his assistants. After reaching the designated place, the meat is pressed on the ground several times. This was an offering to the earth. (Interview with chunkurhomo, Longsa, 14:06:2011). The meat was to be taken back to the village and divided among the priest, the *yingae* and old men of the village. With the completion of this rite, the individual families or clan could proceed with the clearing of the tract of land. The jungle once cleared is left till the month of March to dry. Then the entire tract was burnt on the same day. The priest consulted an omen in order to choose the right person to light the fire, by cutting little chips from a piece of stick and watching how they fall. The chosen man then makes a fire with a

fire stick and sets the tract alight. Then everyone joins in and lights a long line of fire which sweeps uphill till it dies out in the uncleared jungle at the top.

The next day the villagers observed *Emung* or genna called *mimuk emung* to ensure that the village was saved from any kind of fire destruction. (Ngulli, 2008:42). The operation of clearing and burning activities was usually performed in the month of March. Mention may also be made, as noted by Mills, of the *Rangendri* ceremony which was performed after the *pikhvuchak* but before the crops are sown. This genna was marked by hanging of imitation heads of enemies on the *menkitong* (head tree of the village). A pig was sacrificed, and going outside the village fence the *pvüti* lays thirty (30) tiny pieces of the flesh on each of two leaves and prays that in as much as the warriors of the village are following the customs of their forefathers, good fortune may come to all. Then the old men make bamboo baskets, in which the fingers, ears, bits of scalp and other trophies of Naga warrior are put and hang them up on the *menkitong*. The performance of this genna does not permit a man to wear any of the ornaments of a warrior, but entitles him to have one representation of a head put on his grave for each time he does it. (Mills, 1922:129).

The conclusion of the clearing and burning rituals among the Lothas is marked by the propitiation of the deities by observing the *Mochu khurum* also called *Rhuven* or *Rhutsung nrok*. This was the sowing ceremony and performed by the *pvuti*, and after him in the course of the next few days by anyone who has dragged a stone or done the *Etha* ceremony. The ritual was done at a spot outside the village. Offering of chicken meat, boiled rice, rice beer and ginger wrapped in plantain leaf was made to the spirits. Seed- rice and bean seed called *orho* was sowed in a small patch of ground and after the priest poured rice beer over the ground and some incantations were made. The following may serve as an example of a typical prayer:

*“Mhayile!, Mhayile!*

*motsungro, motsunga, molanro motsunga shi thechicho lona,*

*lekhyak sangsu rhyuto, liyu likhum tumpang latsarhyuto phanthitukle,*

*osi ero liko ekuki rheyikhantokkhelo”.*

When translated it means: “Blessed be, blessed be, let this single grain, this paddy plant grow in good health like the grove of the *Latsa* (type of herb which grows lushly) plant, in abundance like the leaves of the banana groves. Let all weed enter into cracked Earth, away from the fertile soil”. For performing the ritual, the *pvüti* receive a measure of rice from the villagers called ‘samara’. Following this ritual, the *pvüti* go on a devoted prayer and follow a strict diet prescribing certain diet for consumption. The priest abstain from eating insects and game of wild animals and observe taboo for seven days. On the eight day the villagers observe Emung or rest day. Normal activities for the *pvüti* and the villagers resumes from the ninth day.

When the crop is about half grown the *muthan Ratsen Mongtsu* ritual is performed to ward off danger to the standing crops from insects and pests. It last for eight days and coincide with *oden choro* (month of June). The *pvüti* performs the rite which involved the sacrifice of a pig. After giving pre notice, the *pvüti* collects unhusked rice from the villagers and barter it for a pig. On the day of the ceremony, the pig was killed and the *pvüti* takes the meat to the outskirt of the village. On the designated spot, he lays ten pieces of meat and ten pieces of ginger on a crossed banana leaves which he place to his right, and to his left he lays nine pieces of meat and nine pieces of ginger on crossed leaves. The usual taboo which warrants the suspension of work follows the ritual which last for eight days. During this period, hunting was suspended and it was taboo to bring game animals inside the village. Selling and exchanging and any other business was suspended. On the eight day the *Likhum*

(ritual for the Field deity) ceremony was observed. The *pvüti* perform the rite by offering pieces of meat called *mari mayo* and *soko* (rice beer).

Another ritual follows called the *Ronsu Ekhum* (ritual for the deity of prosperity) ceremony, which carries the elaborate preliminaries of the *muthan Ratsen*. This was performed when the rice comes to the ear, to ensure a good crop. The *pvüti* (priest), accompanied by his wife and *yingae* (assistant) makes offerings of live pig, chicken, eggs and boar's meat to the *Ronsu*, the protector of crops and the giver of prosperity. The ritual was performed in a spot outside the village. On reaching the spot, the *pvüti* makes fire and near it place four bamboo sticks in the form of a square. In the middle the egg flanked on either side with forty two small pieces of meat were placed on a *yotso* (banana leaf). Then the pig was killed, singed over the fire, cut up, the stomach and entrails cooked on the new pot and eaten by the *pvüti*. The rest of the meat was divided among the men of the village who had dragged a stone. Then an omen for the future of the village was observed by the *pvüti* by strangling the chicken. Then the *pvüti* watches how the excreta fall when the hen struggles. If they were dry, good weather for the crops to ripen well was foreseen. If it was watery storm would cause the crops to rot. Then the entrails were examined without taking it out. If it was full, good harvest was ensured, if empty, poor crop in that year. The chicken was placed on the ground with the egg and the *pvüti* builds a little fence round the offering, hangs on the fire stick with the pot turned upside down. After the sacrifices are made, the *pvüti* returns home and invites all the old men of the village to feast with the pig which he killed. The next day was *Emung*. The *yinga* was sent to see if some animals had taken away the sacrificed hen, for it was a bad omen for the village if it was taken away.

The seventh day after the *Ronsu Ekhum genna*, a day is set aside for a united path-clearing or *Lanvon*, where the whole village participate. During the six days preceding the *Lanvon* day nothing may be sold or killed in the village, and no one may touch a tiger's kill,

or perform any “genna”. On the seventh day the working companies each kill a pig, everyman subscribing his share of the price. The next day is a general picnic and the whole village turns out to clear the jungle from the paths. There is much feasting and drinking, and the *Chumpo* (*morung*) boys have jumping competitions and performs feats of strength. A rest day follows.

*Nshe etuk* also called *Ethan Tsopho* by the northern Lothas, the ceremony of eating the first fruits was the next of the agricultural ritual, performed just before the crops begin to ripen. The ritual was first performed by the priest followed by every household in the village. During the operation of this ritual which last for two to three days, strict taboo was followed by the entire community. Strangers were forbidden to enter the *pvüti*'s house, selling and killing of fowls and animals and bringing of game meat to the village was prohibited. As usual a chicken was sacrificed by the *pvüti* with incantation addressed to the *Ronsu*, supplicating for good crops, protection from enemies, accidents and wild animals. Then the *pvüti* consulted the omen from the excreta and entrails in the usual manner. After the preliminaries are done, the *pvüti* acts as the first reaper by cutting the rice sown during the *Rhuven*(*orhu even*) ceremony with a small sickle, *vekhvu*. (In many angami villages the first reaper must be women). The *pvüti* then husk the rice, throw some grains on his feet, on the hearth stones, on the sickle and on his forehead. The rest was wrapped up in a leaf and boiled. “Then he pretends to eat with murmuring that the rice was bitter. This was to make the squirrels, rats and birds to stay away from the crop.” (Interview with Myanbeni, Wokha 07:12:2013,).It was now open to the individual households to perform the same ceremony at home by bringing the first cut of paddy, except that no killing of pig or chicken was involved. This ceremony was done in the month of *Rongorongi* (October).

Now the villagers prepare for the harvest activities. On the first day of harvest, every family performs a ceremony at their field house in honor of the *Ronsu*, called *Liri than* (harvest sacrifice). They carried to the field the *Ronsuha* (load of *Ronsu*) of pig's head, rice

beer, eggs, salt, cooked rice etc. He lights a fire in the field house and proceed with the ritual. The egg was broken and poured over six grains of rice, wrapped in a leaf and tied on the post of the field house. Then he lights afire a bunch of thatch grass and waves the smoke in a sweeping motion from left to right. This was meant to drive away the evil spirits. Then the *pviiti* offers prayer to *Ronsu* for good crops to fill their granary. Harvest is more than an agricultural exercise. It is the fittest occasion for harmony, cooperation, and mutual help which constitute the main pillars of the Lotha community.

The last of the agricultural ceremony is the *Tokhu Mongtsu* ceremony. It is also known as *Rithak Tokhu* (harvest) as this festival marks the end of the harvest. It is also called *Khingro- Loro Tokhu*, and *kijan* or *Echui vachi tokhu*. This was the main agricultural ceremony of the year and its celebration spread over a period of about ten days and held in the month of *chopuk* ie, November. (Interview with Nzan tsopoe, sungro, 15:02: 2014). The constant shuttling between home and jhum field, the threshing and storing is at last over. It is a time for a breather. The granaries are full, clan and village contributions of rice have been made, and there are still enough to spare. This is the time when the Lothas observe the harvest festival, the festival which bids farewell to the souls of the departed. They are urged to leave the village and not to hover over their old haunts. It is a solemn festival especially poignant for those who have lost their loved ones during that year. Each of the ten days has a well defined observance.

The *pviiti* fixes the date of the festival by the lunar calendar which was announced to the village in advance. The date of the festival is fixed basing on situations. The priest cannot declare or announce if there is any death in the village. (Lilanthung,1993:20). If death occurs, the date of the festival is extended to another six days if the deceased is male, and five days if female. Therefore, proper clarification is done before the announcement. Before sunset the *chumpo* members assembled at the *pviiti*'s house, discuss the date, and the *Yinga* announces

the same to the villagers ten days before the fixed date of commencement. Activities spanning the ten days are as follows: on the first day the priest and *yingae* starts performing rituals. They go round the village collecting unhusked rice with which they make *soko* for the ceremony and also buys a pig. Men married in during the year have to make extra contribution to receive special blessing from the *pvüti* when he them on his round. On the fourth day, the priest, *yingae* and *chumpo* inmates collects husked rice from house to house for preparation of rice beer. On the fifth, the entire village stays at home to receive blessings from the priest. The collection of paddy rice was also done from house to house. Those who give more receive more blessing, those who give less receive less blessing, those who do not give receive only bitter curse from the *pvüti*. As such, in order to make the priest happy, and receive more blessing, all the houses are willing to contribute to the *pvüti*'s satisfaction for prosperity through the priest prayer. On the seventh day, a pig sacrifice was performed. The liver was cut into small pieces called *Sontho* or holy meat. This was meant for the spirit of the dead. The *pvüti* with the assistants then distribute the meat to the houses where death occurred during the year. It is taboo to eat the *sontho* or *echuiso* (meat for the dead). In the evening, the old women in the village gather at the *pvüti*'s house to perform a rite for the soul of the dead. The elders remain in the house of the *pvüti* late that day to discuss and make decision for important village issues. On the eight day, rebuilding of the *chumpo ki* are done. In the evening home visitation and procession was done.

The ninth day was the *Kijan* day, a day of prayer to the Deity of fertility. It is also the day of *echui tokhu* (ceremony for the dead), because it is believed that the soul of the dead are released on that day. The bereaved families are freed and separated from the souls of the dead on the *Kijan* day with the performance of rituals called *kijan elhi* to release the souls of the dead. The *kijan tokhu* is an important ceremony of the festival. In a designated spot called '*kijanphen* or *Amongphen*, an open space reserved for this purpose outside the village fence or



gate, the *pvüti* perform a ritual attended by all the elders, the *chumpo* boys and men of the village. A pig and a cock is sacrificed by the *pvüti* while invoking a long prayer for bringing rich harvest, for protection against diseases and natural calamities, accidental death, prosperity and blessing, and for fertility of the people to increase population for the coming year. After the *Kijan* ceremony the villagers go home in groups singing folk songs and chanting victory cries. New *chumpo ki* (*morung* house) were constructed before the *kijan* but roofing is done only on the day of *kijan*. It is to be noted that from the first to the eight day the village goes into taboo enforced on killing of any kind of animals, selling, and bringing of game meat inside the village. Movement of the villagers to other villages was restricted lest they bring bad luck. In the same way, visitors from other villages were also restricted, lest they enter the village they were to stay back in the village for the entire duration of the festival. The taboo on killing of animals and fowls during the previous days was lifted and the day is given up to feasting.

The working companies, the peer group, especially who worked together during the year hold little feasts and visit the houses of the different members. Since the *kijan tokhu* was connected intimately with the dead, it is also the time to take omens to see who is to die in the course of the year. In the evening the *chumpo* boys sprinkles ashes round the entrance of their sleeping rooms. If tracts are found in the morning fitting any of the foot of the boys, then it is believed that the boy's *omon* (soul) had gone to the land of the dead and would die the same year. The tenth day was an *Emung*, or mass genna called *Tokhu emung*. The ornaments and erections were thrown away. It was a rest day and no one should go out of the village. This festival closes the agricultural year of the Lothas.

Agriculture is an economic activity. It is essentially an individual enterprise. But it is also enjoined to society as shifting cultivation entails a community activity which involves the whole village, *khel* and clan and their cooperation in making the fields ready for cultivation.

Moreover, if the crops fail, it is not only the individual but the whole community that suffers the consequences. Therefore, the ceremonies connected with agriculture are important.

## LIFE CYCLE RITUALS

### BIRTH

The socio- religious ritual becomes important during different phases of an individual's life. Even before a child is born, a pregnant mother is required to observe certain strict taboos to ensure the health of the unborn child. She must not kill a snake, for it is believed that by doing so the child would have a tremulous tongue, she must not cut her hair, and the meat of tortoise, pangolin, bear or the kill of any wild animals was taboo. At time of birth she is attended to by the traditional midwife, the *oshang essui*, (one who throw away the after birth, placenta). (Interview with Mhonchan odyuo, Yikhum Village, 15:06:2014)). In case of difficult delivery, the husband rubs a little of his saliva on the woman's stomach. It is also believed that rubbing the skin of *sungrum*, (a lizard with smooth and glossy surface) on the navel and stomach make delivery easy (Interview with Mhonchan odyuo). Traditionally, when a mother give birth She cooks in a new hearth and new pots, eats in a new plate and drinks in a new cup. The *oshang essui*, the moment the child is delivered calls it by any name which comes to mind and not the real name which was to be given. This was meant to deceive the evil spirit, *tsungram* (evil spirit), who supposedly listen at the door.

The umbilical cord is cut by a sharp bamboo splinter and never with a knife. A worship offering of egg to the deities is performed after the cutting of the cord. Omens are also consulted on the birth of the child to ascertain his or her future prospects. The baby is then given a bath, and the *oshang essui* puts a little boiled rice into the baby's mouth. The *oshang essui* then wraps the placenta in a piece of cloth, put it in a small basket and hang it on

a tree designated for the purpose on the outskirts of the village. According to Mhonchan odyuo, the Lothas do not bury the after birth as the Angami and Sema do because the Lothas believe that if it is eaten by a dog or wild animals, it would cause death or serious illness of the child. It would also cause madness among the offspring of the child. It happened to one of the ancestors of the Odyuo clan, whose placenta was eaten by a dog. That is why it is taboo for the Odyuo clan to eat the meat of a dog. (Interview with Mhonchan odyuo of Yikhum village. 15:06:2014). That also explains why it is not buried, but hung on a tree to keep it out of the way of dogs, pigs and other wild animals. The whole ceremony is performed by women only.

Cooking in a new hearth and new pots symbolizes the arrival of the new baby. It also signifies the undefiled materials used for the new born thus invoking good health, prosperity and long life to the new born baby. If a son is born, a cock is killed and if a daughter is born, a hen is killed. Before the naming ceremony of the new born child, omens are observed, and the name of the baby is pronounced. The *ngaromuchuk* (naming ceremony) takes place after six days from the birth in case of a boy, and after five days for a girl. The next six days and five days respectively for a boy and baby girl, the parents observe a house taboo. They were not to go out of the house or speak to anyone nor any strangers entertained. Then the ceremony of *pvuphoden* (first carrying the child) is observed. The baby is placed on the back of the first carrier who carries the baby around the house by a boy if the baby is a boy and by a girl if the baby is a girl signifying the baby has been named. The carrying by a boy or a girl conveys the sex of the new born child without having to announce the same. After two or three months the ears of the child are bored and ear-rings called *No-ru* or *eno-thera* are put in them. Piercing of the child's ears is not attended by ceremonies.

## MARRIAGE

Marriage is an elaborate ceremonial, though it does not entail much of the ritualistic performance. Before the proposal, *phyali* (lot) is consulted to know the auspiciousness of the proposal. If the omens are predicted hopeful, a go between, usually the boy's mother or some elderly female relation is entrusted to carry out the marriage proposal to the girl's parents. The go between visits the girl's parents with *soko* (rice beer), and settle the bride price. Then the *tsoyuta* (eating and drinking or engagement of the couple) takes place at the house of the girl. The boy, along with an old relative and his best man takes *soko* and a cock for the purpose. The old man, holding sixteen tiny pieces of the cock's meat on both hands prays for the happiness and long life of the boy and the girl. After the engagement ceremony, the boy is required to work in the father in law's house for a year, until the next *tokhu emong*, when the *hanlam* (bride price) ceremony takes place. The marriage is completed with the *ponyi Ratsen*; (seer of the couple) ceremony. These rituals are significant because of the fact that on a good and auspicious beginning sought through divination depend the prosperity and happiness of the couple.

## DEATH

The death ceremonies of the Lothas are not intricate. At death the nearest relation present closes the eyes and washes the face of the corpse. A very old man ties cowrie beads to a chicken's leg and places it for a moment in the dead man's hand. He then kills it in order that it may go clucking along the Road of the dead. (Mills 1922, 157), and gives warning that the deceased is coming. It is hung by the neck above the head of the corpse, and after the burial the wings are cut off and stuck up on the wall of the house and the body either thrown

away or given to the *mungpen* (buriers) to eat. The deceased relatives or closest friends bring meat, rice and rice beer for the inmates of the dead man's house, for no food is cooked by them that day. The corpse is buried as soon as possible, but not after sunset, in front of the house, where the grave is dug by the *mungpen*. The body is buried fully dressed, and a cornelian bead is tied to the dead man's wrist to give to the *Etchhili vantamo* (keeper of the gate to the abode of the dead), whom he will meet on the road of the dead, in exchange for a drink of water. The body is wrapped in traditional shawls and carried outside by the *mungpen*. Then it is placed on a bamboo mat, and tied with thin strips of bamboo on six places if male and on five places if female (Interview with Pilamo tungoe, Changsu Village.10:12:2013)).

After the burial, the grave is covered with heaps of stone and thorns to prevent pigs and dogs scratching up the earth. A low fence is built round it. Two bamboo posts are then put up, one at the head and the other at the foot, with a cross bar between them. A basket containing a guard filled with *soko* (rice beer), rice and six pieces of meat wrapped in a leaf is hung on the post at the head. The ornaments and wooden dao handle and fire sticks are hung on the crossbar. The spear of the deceased is stuck upright on the grave. In case of a female, a basket containing boiled rice and five pieces of meat is hung on the post. Her ornaments and weaving tools are kept on the grave. A fire is lighted on the grave. After this rituals are over, the family members of the deceased go into '*genna*', for six days after the death of a male and five days after the death of a female it becomes taboo for the family members to talk to strangers or kill any animals. To bring the household out of the taboo, fowl is sacrificed and a prayer is offered that the spirit would not haunt the house. Then a pig is sacrificed is sacrificed for a man who has not taken a head and a mithun for a man who has taken a head. When this taboo period is over, the valuables from the grave are taken out and old, unusable ones are placed. The fire is to be kept alight on the grave, and offerings of bits of food continued until the *Tokhu Emong*, when the *echu enyia* ceremony is done to release the soul

of the dead, which incidentally goes to the land of the dead. Bamboo stick are stuck up on the path , by the side of the village which leads to the Land of the dead, and guard of *soko*, rice and six pieces of meat for a male and five pieces for a female are tied to it to refresh the dead while on its way.

The Lothas believe that the Land of the dead is situated at the mount tiyi, the highest peak in Lotha area, situated on the north of Yanthamo village at an altitude of 1969.61 meters above sea level. It is considered as the ‘abode of the dead souls’. There are several mysterious tales about the Mt. Tiyi. Legend says that the keeper of the gate of this abode were *etcchili vantamo*, *apisangla* and *jungkhumrhoni*. Incidentally, there is a stone slab called *Lonkalup* which produces sound when stepped upon, which the Lothas believed that every passing soul step upon to send message to the keepers of the gate . This gate is called the ‘the dead hole’. Legend has it that in the olden days an unknown disease which seemed like a chronic skin disease spread in the land and many people died. There was a man who had a very dear son. Unfortunately, his son died of the disease. The grieving father, determined to prove where the soul of his son had really gone tied nine rounds of strong cane rope around his waist and went towards Mt. tiyi. He tied one end of the rope to a tree and climbed the cliff .on reaching the mouth of the hole he found the scabs of his son stuck to the side of the hole, and confirmed that his son had really gone in there (interview with Penathung Ngullie, Longla village, 05:06:2013)).

Another mystery found on the mount Tiyi is what tradition calls the ‘fountain of the dead’. It is believed that the soul of the dead bath there before proceeding towards the ‘dead hole’. It is also believed that *Etchhili vandamo* and *Apisangla* fetch water from this fountain and waits for the souls of the dead. Therefore in the olden days, when a person dies, an ornament was tied around the wrist of the corpse before burial, which is exchanged with water from the two gate keepers of the dead hole. The rituals thus completed the Lothas believe that

the village can begin a new year without fear of haunting by the dead. Thus, the most important agricultural festival of the Lothas, the *Tokhu Emong* end with the *Etchu enya* ceremony.

Besides the usual funerary rituals, mention may also be made of the rites performed for persons who died of unnatural circumstances which the Lothas called *mmen echui*. In such cases, the normal procedure is not allowed. The Lothas believed that these deaths are caused by the wrath of the evil spirit (*tsungrham*), therefore strict purificatory rituals are necessary. In such cases as deaths caused by falling from a tree, childbirth, killing by wild animals, accidentally falling on one's spear or dao, by fire or drowning while fishing, strict taboos are observed. As soon as the news of such disaster reaches the village, an old man makes a fire on the village path. It is *sari emvu* (taboo) for the dead body to be brought inside the village and so they are buried on the spot where the accident occurred or where the victim died. Persons entering the village must step through the smoke of the fire, and also hold their weapons and tools over the fire for a moment. Then they must wash their hands before entering the village, lest they bring the evil with them inside the village. The house and all the property of dead man, including the granary are abandoned. The family of the deceased move to the *Emvu Ranki* (taboo hut) built for them by the villagers and the whole household observe a taboo for six days, during which they must not speak to anyone. Among the southern Lothas the usual custom is for the household to remain in the old house for six days. At the *Emvu Ranki*, a ritual expert is called to perform a purificatory rite for the family at the end of the taboo days. A cock is sacrificed, and they pass through the fire and wash their hands and feet. When they are ceremonially clean they move to a little house built for them outside the village, where they remain until the next *Tokhu Emung* when the ceremony of *Kijan* or releasing the soul of the dead is performed.



## ESCHATOLOGY

For the Lothas life on Earth was the main concern, life after death was a vague and shadowy concept. But the idea of the soul which live on after death was understood, therefore it was necessary for the dead to be properly buried with proper funerary rites to pacify the spirit of the dead that it may not come to disturb or take away the living members of the family, and also to allow the departed spirit to go freely and peacefully to the abode of the dead. Offerings were made too, partly to keep their memories alive. Among the Lothas, the practice of burying the dead before sunset was meant to enable the soul of the dead to reach the abode peacefully. Cowrie beads are also tied on the wrist of the dead to trade it for refreshment while on their journey to their abode. It is believed that the souls of the dead reside in the underworld, whose entrance lies in the Mount Tiyi. Very little attention is paid to their mode of life there except that the Lothas pictured it as similar to existence on this earth. The soul of the dead person is believed to be his exact image at the time of his death, with the same marks and scars. They believe that the souls go to the nether world where the ancestors meet them, and the life they lead there is a repetition of their lives on Earth. If they were poor on Earth, they remain poor there too, and if rich, they have wealth. (Interview with Pilamo Tungoe. Changsu village).

Zanao Mozhui writes that “the spirit of the forefathers was worshipped in times of trouble and sickness” (2004:22), implying that the Lothas practiced ancestor worship. However, ancestor worship or the worship of the spirit of the dead was not practiced by the Lothas. It cannot be denied, certainly, that the departed occupy an important part in the Lotha religiosity, but it is wrong to interpret it as ancestor worship. Libations and the giving of meat and *soko* (rice beer) during the different Lotha ceremonies are tokens of fellowship and

respect and symbols of family continuity and contact and therefore ‘worship’ is the wrong word to apply in this situation.

## DEVELOPMENTAL RITUALS

The first of the developmental ritual required to be performed by the parents of a male child is ‘*Raho*’. Before the performance of the ceremony, the *pvüti* sees the omen by cutting a bamboo cup filled with *soko* (rice beer). Literally ‘*ra*’ means ‘enemies’, and ‘*ho*’ means ‘slay’. So this ceremony was meant to initiate a boy to a warrior, a head hunter. The boy is made to proclaim, ‘before this cup dries up, I will take the head of an enemy’, thus saying the cup is cut into two with a dao. If it breaks exactly in the middle, the proclamation was believed to come true. If it did not, it was taken as a bad omen. Then the *pvüti* utters this prayer:

Let it be a good omen, we are opening the *mengkitong* today,

Let good fortune come, bless us with lots of animals, sons and daughters, meat and fish,

Let no harm come upon the young men and women of this village,

Let them live in harmony. (Ngullie, 1994: 35).

After pronouncing this prayer the *pvüti* perform the ritual. The ritual is done at the house of the *pvüti*. The preliminaries of the *Raho* ritual is describe by Ngullie as follows: “the *Raho maru* (pieces of meat) was cut into six tiny pieces and kept aside, then a chicken is killed and roasted, the meat is then wrapped up in banana leaves. The boys for whom the ritual is performed are given six pieces of meat and a kilo of salt. The entrails were given to the elders, the chicken is given to the eldest called *shorhe* (meritorious group). They also collect rice for the purpose called *tssikhu rikhya* from those performing the *Raho* which is kept at the place of the *Vukhjong* ( pig piercer). The rice is also distributed to the boys. After

all is done, they disperse from the house of the *pviiti*. This ceremony is performed usually in the autumn season, soon after renovating the *chumpo*.

The *Zhutan* is the next ritual for the Lotha young man. It is a very simple ceremony observed by a man before marriage. He hosts a feast where all the man of his clan who has already done the *Zhutan* was invited. A bull is killed and presents of meat and *soko* (rice beer) are given to the guests.

This genna is followed by the *shishang*, a more elaborate ritual which is performed only after marriage. Two pigs (*sonkyu* and *ejo*) and a cock (*ozhu eyen*) are killed and *soko* (rice beer) beer are prepared. The pigs are slaughtered by the older members of the meritorious group. Then the one called *sonkyu* is given to the in-laws (*ejanphyoi*), the pig slayers (*vukjong*), the one bringing the leaves for wrapping purpose in the ceremony (*yusi*) and those who take care of the things (*yupen*). The *vukjong* are given one and a half kilo each along with salt of the same quantity. The remaining part is distributed among the relatives and in-laws (Ngullie,1994:36). Then a small pig is sacrificed and the *vukjong* offers this prayer for the performer's welfare while facing eastward:

“If this *ozhu* is performed by killing a pig, let there be no deaths,

Let him prosper in his entire endeavor,

Let his friends be like grasshopper.

May you bless him with your words that one hornbill can bring a buffalo,

Let him buy precious ornaments with maize,

Bless him with abundant blessings”.( Tungoe,2010:21).

The sacrificed is then cooked and eaten by the *vukjong*, but it is a taboo meat for the host of the ritual. This is followed by a ceremony called *tssungcheno khoroi rhovoala* (entering the backyard to erect a post). For this an egg and a chicken is used. The village

elders and the in-laws participate by carrying rice and rice beer. The food is eaten and a lot is placed where the post is erected. In the evening the owner holding the cock asks the *sorhe* (meritorious group), “did I pass the *ozhu* or not?”. Then the members in union say, “yes, you passed”. The cock is then killed and divided among the *vukjong* and the *Yusi*. Then the “*shyuilang* (fats in the stomach) of the pig killed is chopped into small pieces, wrapped in two leaves, thirty pieces placed into each and hung on the ‘senki’ (post for hanging things). The observance of this ritual entitles the performer to wear the ‘phanrubsu’. (a shawl made with combination of red and black with white in the middle, where pictures of spears, daos and animals are embroidered). (Ngullie, 1994:37). With the performance of this ritual a man climbs another step of the social ladder.

The third social genna is called *Etha*, the preliminaries of the ritual follows much the same as that of the *shishang* ceremony. The performance of this rite entitles a man to wear the shawl called *Ethasu*. Then a ceremony called *osoni ewo* (granary) is performed at the granary of the man who has done the sacrifice. The two *vukjongs* sacrifice two pigs and two fowls outside the granary. The meat is then divided up and the fowls’ feathers are tied to bamboos outside the granary as a sign that the ceremony had been performed there.

After the work of *Etha* is completed, a bull or mithun (*tssiro*) without any blemish is brought in to start the *tssiro Etso Osho*. (mithun feast). A man intending to hold this feast informs the *vukjong* in advance, who in turn inform all the married men folk of the clan. These men become the *wothang* (announcers) entrusted to give public notice in the village. In preparation for the feast, rice is pounded and *soko* (rice beer) prepared. On the day of the ceremony, a bull without blemish is tied up in front of the sacrificer’s house, given water and allowed to lick salt out of the hands of the sacrificer’s wife. The *vukjong* touches it on the head with a stick and recites this prayer:

Let there be blessing.

The young men and women has entrusted me this responsibility  
saying they can lean on no one else.

I am holding this spear and like God's spirit, I am sheltering you,  
may you protect the front, back, right and left of your people. (Ngillie,1994:35).

The mithun is then killed by an old man with a spear thrust into its heart. The meat is divided up as follows: the chest to the clan of the performer of the sacrifice, the hindquarters to his wife's clan, the fore- legs to the husbands of women of his clan (*ejanephyoi*), the meat of the head to the *wotung* (announcers), the tongue to the man who helped to buy the mithun, and the lower part of the stomach to the old man who killed it". (Mills,1922:141). It is taboo for the sacrificer to eat the meat of the sacrificed animal. The performer is allowed to hang the skull and horns of the mithun after he perform the stone dragging ceremony, until which it is kept in the *chumpo* (*morung*). With the observance of the mithun sacrifice being completed, the feasts and merry- making begins. For this a pair of pigs and cows called *sonki* is brought, butchered and the meat are distributed among the members who have already given the *osho* depending in their status. The meat is also given to his well wishers and in- laws. The *pvüti* then say the following prayer for the host couple:

Let there be blessing upon this couple.

Let nothing bad said about them.

Like sunshine, moon and stars, let their life so shine.

Like the hornbill perched on the tree after a refreshing drink,

Let no misfortune befall them.

Let their hearts be like the covering of orange and lemon". (Tongoe, 2010:pp39-40).

The feast is celebrated with much singing and drinking, *eramoren khen* (traditional ceremonial songs) are sung, and *soko* (rice beer) distributed to every house in the village. This is called *yan sho* (feeding the village with rice beer).

The following year the *ozu esu* (stone dragging) ceremony is observed. This is the most important developmental social ‘*genna*’ and plays significant part in a Lotha life. Beginning with the dragging of the first stone, the rituals increase in costliness and importance. The social standing of the performer is elevated each time he perform the ceremony. Therefore it is the ambition of every Lotha to perform the full series, from the first, where one stone is dragged and erected, to the second and third and so on when two stones are dragged in each. There is no limit to the number of times the stone- dragging ceremony may be done. “In fact, there was a time when, in the final feasts, after completing the whole series, even birds, beasts, chicken and other domestic animals were invited. Meat and rice were scattered on the ground for the village pigs and fowls, and rice and food were taken to the host’s fields for the birds to feed on it”. (Interview with Thungdamo Ezung, Longsa village, 05:05: 2012)).

To begin with the ceremony, a *emung ranki* (genna shed), is built at the back of the performer’s house where he and his family must sleep till the ceremony is over, then a stone is selected. The *wotung* (announcers) are to announce the date of the ceremony on behalf of the performer who is not supposed to allow any stranger into his house till the completion of the ceremonies. He was also to remain chaste throughout the ceremony. Rice is pounded and rice beer prepared with much singing. On the appointed day the in-laws (*ejanphyoi*) drag the stone, and bring it to the selected place called *zuchanphen* (stone viewing place), where they are met by the men folk of the performer’s clan in full dancing dress. Then the wife of the performer comes out with full traditional attire to serve the *pviiti* with *zutsu* (pure wine). The *pviiti* pours a little of the beer on the stone and says a prayer. Then the senior *vukjong* sacrifice

a chicken by cutting its throat with a sharp piece of bamboo, and with an egg lays it on the stone. The stone is then carried to the performer's house. The next day a hole is dug where the stone is to be set up. Feasting, singing *orueya* ('fall of enemies' where they recounted the number of heads taken from enemy villages) and drinking continues. Then the *pviiti* (priest) says this prayer:

They have brought the stone, they have started the feasting.

Bless this couple, let no calamities befall their fields.

Bless them in their trade, exchanging hornbill with a bull, maize with ornaments.

Bless them with abundant piglets and chickens.

Bless them with healthy children, fit, strong and good looking, like vines of cucumber and millet.

Bless them with long life and abundance.

For this couple, may a cup of rice beer serves many people, a spoon of curry serve many.

Bless them.

The rest of the evening is spent in feasting and singing. The following day, the stone is set up, and the *pviiti* says the *zu chan* (stone viewing), prayer as follows:

"This is our pledge; we will not place you in our backyard or leave you like that, but place you on a high place where people can see you, admire and praise your beauty. Dear stone, glide to your destiny, wild and free without any hindrance as we sing this song for you. Let there be no division but help us to live and exist like this stone" (Tungoe,2010:28).

Near the monolith, a forked post(Y shaped wooden post) is erected, perhaps to represent the female organ of generation, and thus a symbol of fertility. This is followed by the *soki chana*. Literally, *soki* means 'animal head' and '*chana*' means 'serve'. Here the host couple clad in full traditional attire display themselves to the people. The wife pours *zutsu* over the mithun's skull which is displayed outside the house. It is the occasion where the



performer gets honor and respect from the people and thus earn the title of an *Ekhyo Ekhung* (one who boasts in victory). The performer is entitled to wear the *longpensu* (black and blue shawl). It is to be noted that only married men can perform the series of *osho* (feast of merit), for the wife plays an honorable part throughout the ceremonies.

The feast of merit (*osho*) is no doubt a means to climb the ladder of social recognition, but it is also a means for distributing wealth in the community. It shows that among the Lothas the accumulation of wealth was not for selfish or greedy motive but wealth was accumulated with the idea of sharing. It also contributed to the communitarian spirit of the Lothas.

## COMMUNITY RITUALS

*Epo Etha* (giving what is due) ritual is performed in remembrance of the Lotha ancestor, giving him his due share in the community and to ward off evils and deaths. (Murry,1999:22). It is widely believed that the Lotha tribe came across the Himalayas and settled in the present area. While on their way of migration, they came across a path where they had to cross a cave. Rankhandan, the Lotha ancestor, because of his stag like horns could not pass through the cave. He requested the Lothas to follow the rituals to remember him. Thus the Lothas perform this ceremony in fulfillment of this promise once a year, usually before the *rhuvén* (sowing) ceremony. A pig is killed and twenty- three little pieces of meat, a handful of rice, boiled egg, boiled rice, pieces of ginger (considered as magical disinfectant by the Lothas) and a bamboo cup filled with *soko* are put in a basket which is to be taken to the outskirts of the village by an old man called in for the purpose. This ritual is performed by every household in the village. Then the old man sprinkle *soko* on the house posts and throws pieces of ginger on the ground and says a prayer addressing Rankhandan:

*“oki shilo tsutsailan topvu lona khichei ni khumaka,  
osi pothe pori topvu ethazhua nzyu shilo ni khumaka,  
nochonori osi ezupetsu etitssotukkhe,  
osi mhona evanthok khelo”*( Murry,1999:22).

When translated it means: “we have given you all the things in this house, let no diseases or deaths or other misfortunes befall us in the future”. Having done this, the old man takes the prepared basket, calling all the evil spirits to follow him, goes outside the village, lights a small fire and sprinkle *soko* (rice beer) on the ground. Then small sticks of bamboo, five pieces on the right and four pieces on the left are laid on the ground. Then five pieces of the boiled egg, five pieces of ginger and scrapes of the meat, little heap of boiled rice and rice husks are put on the right, and four pieces of the egg, ginger, meat and rice are placed on the left. Then the old man spits *soko* over it while saying a prayer. Then the bamboo cup which holds the *soko* is split into two to see the omen. If both falls inside up or outside up the omen is good. But if one falls one way and one the other it is bad omen.( Mills 1922:133). The split bamboo is placed on either side, and the old man eats the food and goes to his house. It is taboo for the performer and his household to see the old man on the same day. The next day the basket is returned by the old man for which he receive a handful of rice as his fee.

The *Oyantsoa* (making of village) is another important community ritual of the Lothas. This ceremony is performed on several occasions namely, at the establishment of a new village, at the death of the *pvüti*, when the *Menkitong* (head tree) dies by itself and at intervals of nine to ten years when it becomes necessary to renew the blessings of the deities. This ritual was observed in the winter season (*vamithung*), before sowing begins. In all these, the procedure follows the same. The *pvüti* announce the day on which the ceremony is to be performed. Rice is collected from the whole village by the *pvüti* accompanied by the *yingae* and *soko* (rice beer) prepared. Then the ritual begins with the dog killing ceremony held

outside the *pvüiti*'s house. The ears of the dog is then cut off by the *yingae* and hangs it on the roof of the *pvüiti*'s house.

The next day the *ophya chuma* ceremony takes place. The *Chumpo* boys, after having observed sexual taboo for three days, go to the jungle to cut the *Ophya* (wooden post). A big tree is felled, and a post of about six feet in length and two feet in width is cut out of it. This is trimmed flat on one side. Then the unmarried men drag it to the designated place, usually outside the village fence, with the flat side facing the village and sets it up. The next three days are *Mongtsu Emong* (whole village genna). It is taboo (*sari sapvu*) for women to see the *ophya* being dragged in or to sew or weave during the taboo days. At the close of the taboo days, the men folk of the village assemble in the place where the *ophya* (post) was set up, with full traditional dresses. The *pvüiti* then sees the omen (*phyali*) of the village by cutting the throat of a cock and observing its entrails. Then he says the traditional prayer for the prosperity of the village. The sacrificed cock is put up on the *ophya*, and bamboo spears are thrown at the *Ophya*, while chanting the *Shamashari*, the chant of warriors who are bringing home heads. A fence is built round the *ophya*.

The next day the *Oha* (Luck stones) kept under the *Menkitong* (head tree) are counted. It is believed that if the numbers has increased from the previous year's count it is a good omen for the village, but if it has decreased it is a bad omen. After five days, the fence is removed by the *pvüiti* by performing the last rites, with an offering of an egg and thirty (30) tiny pieces of dog's meat. These mark an end of the *oyantssoa* ceremony.

## HEAD HUNTING RITUAL

The real basis of head-hunting among all the Naga tribes is the belief that the head is the seat par excellence of the life-essence which informs human beings as well as many other

animals. (Hutton, 1921:408). The practice originated out of a belief that the soul matter, on which all life depended, was stored in the head of human beings. So, whenever a person was beheaded and his head taken to another village, the soul matter inside the severed head was also transformed to that village. The recipient village, it was believed, would gain in prosperity, its population would increase, cattle would multiply, and the crops would be luxuriant.(Elwin,1959:35). The severed head was therefore taken home by the victor as his hard- earned trophy. (Penzu, 2009:10). Besides the economic motive, heads are taken for ritual purposes and to gain honour and respect in the society. Taking of an enemy's head conferred on a man the right to wear certain dresses and ornaments, not entitled to others. (Thong, 2012:15). The man who has taken the most heads is considered as a hero and is ceremonially honored in life as well as in death. Heroes seek honor, glory and renown, believing that to obtain these is of much greater importance than life itself. So for them, it was partly religious, partly to show social maturity and partly for fertility and agricultural prosperity. Such a trophy was treated with solemn ceremonies.

Among the Lothas, every male member, after attaining certain age limit undergo compulsory training in the art of warfare in their *chumpo (morung)*. During major war all adult males participate in the fighting. Every male member took such a battle as an opportunity to exercise his maturity and feats in fighting. Though considered to be a sign of valor and courage, often the heads were taken in 'treacherous and cowardly ways' (Philip, 1976:11), as in most instances heads were taken in ambush on helpless children and women and not in open warfare. Joseph. S. Thong, however, says that high honor were heaped on those braves who brought back the heads of women and children as trophies, for women and children were usually protected in the heart of the village, and could only be killed through exceptional feats and courage. (Thong, 2012:13).

The proper preparatory proceedings to head hunting trips open by sending a messenger to the village with which the challenging village desired a trial of strength. This messenger is chosen from men who are well versed with the dialect of the challenged village. After the message reached the challenged village, preparation commences. The *pvüti* and the old men of the village consult omen by killing a chicken and breaking an egg. In some villages, omen is seen by slicing the stem of a type of plant called *Mungsentsung* (*Adhatoda zeylanica*) and observe which side it fell to the ground. If the omen is propitious, the raid party set forth under the command of a man who has experienced such raids and noted for valor. The warriors strictly adhere to the taboos associated with head hunting. A man intending to go to such raid had to remain chaste. The women, while their husbands were away must not weave or spin. If a warrior hiccup or cough while eating dinner it is a bad omen for him and so should stay back.

The heads taken are brought to the village with much chanting of *shamashari*, the wordless chant of warriors who are bringing home heads. The head was usually carried by the one who took it. As they approach the village, the villagers welcome them with food and drink outside the village fence to refresh them. From each head, hair is cut off put in a stick set up outside the village fence. Then the heads are taken to the *Menkitong* while chanting “Oh ! ! *shamashari*, Oh! *pangashari*, Oh! *Yanungshari*! Oh! *Emhayile*. (Oh! We have killed an enemy, oh! Bless us). (Interview with Merithung Odyuo, Wokha Town. 20:12:2012). Sometimes the ceremony of hanging up the heads take place the next day because of time being needed to prepare for the ceremony and also for the warriors to take rest. The raiders could not go to their houses that day because they were considered ceremoniously unclean. The raiding party had to sleep in the *Chumpo*, the heads being put up on a ledge of the *Humtsen*, the main post of the *Chumpo*.

The next day the *pvuti* and warriors kills a dog and a pig and feasts on it. Then the heads are taken to the *menkitong* with the usual cry of *shamashari* and hung it in the presence of the entire villagers. A sharp bamboo stick is run into the base of the skull, a strong cord of cane is attached to the edges of the bamboo stick and pieces of red flowers are stuck to the ears. Then the *orri Luma* or *orri khata* ceremony takes place in which all the *Chumpo* boys intending to join such raids in the future are allowed to throw their spears at the head. *Orri luma* means warming the village on account of the enemy's head, so the whole village observe victory celebration, *Ramvu*, by feasting and drinking and going for procession around the village chanting the *shamashari*.

With this ritual done the *pvüiti* says a prayer calling the deities to bless them with fertility, good crop and prosperity of the village and also for blessing of more heads. For the next six days gennas are observed. The warriors were forbidden to sleep with a woman for six days and also not to eat meat of prey during the taboo days. On the fifth day, the purificatory rite was performed by washing the hands, dao and spears of the warriors. On the sixth day, all assembled at the *pvüiti*'s house and partake dinner with him, marking an end of the taboo period. Sometimes, the raiders could bring only bits of the body parts of the slain enemy. The ceremony follows the same in such cases too. When an enemy is brought to the village alive, called *Worantssan* by the Lothas, they are released only after a fine of a cow and Mithun is paid by the victim's family members. (Interview with Nzan Tsopoe, Sungro village, Wokha. 15:02:2012).

## SHAMAN

Shaman is a person who acts as intermediary between the natural and supernatural worlds, using magic to cure illness and foretell the future. Some people, it is believed, possess

a divine power to foresee things to occur and can discover whose spirit and in what manner an appeasement is to be made for healing sickness and epidemic. They are thus consulted for all kinds of sickness and for appeasement. They are regarded as physicians those days when there were no doctors nor physicians to be consulted, and there were no medicines available in the ancient days. (Presler,1977:29). Shamanism is practiced in small- scale societies in which hunting and agriculture are dominant forms of subsistence. The shamans are skilled practitioners of a technique which induces a state of trance in order to create connection between the human and non- human worlds. In short, shaman is the name given to the specialist in spirits whose domain of expertise comprises both the visible and the invisible world.

There are two types of Shamans. The first type becomes shaman either by hereditary or by learning. They receive training and education from master shaman. They pass through some initiation rites before they begin functioning as shaman. The second group of shamans become shaman by choice, chosen by the gods to act as mediator between the supernatural and humans. He experiences dreams and ecstasies. The Lotha Shaman is called *Ratsen* (medicine man), and belong to the second group. The Lotha *Ratsen* is not Hereditary and any man or woman is liable to develop the symptoms associated with shamanism. A person affected with these symptoms goes into a fit or into deep trance or delirium, especially during full moon. The Lothas believed that it was during those fits that the soul of the *Ratsen* goes to the next world to communicate with the spirits. When a person shows these symptoms for the first time, an experience *Ratsen* is called in to diagnose the case. If he proclaims it to be genuine he strangles a cock, from the head of which he is believed to extract a small stone called *Ratsen*ha. (Mills, 1922: 164). This stone is believed to be kept by the new *Ratsen* in his head.

The function of the *Ratsen* is to dream and to foretell the future. But his main function is to cure illnesses caused by the evil spirits. That is why the Lothas called him the Medicine man. By falling into a trance and separating the spirit from the corporeal body, the shaman is believed to cure the sick, escort the souls of the dead to the underworld, foretell the future, and transcend time and space as well as the boundaries between the living and the non- living, in order to find something lost or to assist hunters in tracking down prey. (Partridge, 2007:124). The Lothas attributes all sickness to the malice of the *tsungrham*, the evil spirit. This evil spirit cause sickness and epidemic by introducing some foreign objects into the body of humans or by taking away their souls. In such cases, the *Ratsen* is consulted to find out the foreign objects, which may be a stone, piece of wood or sticks or even hair, and extract it. The *Ratsen* is also entrusted to trace the soul of the sick person. The *Ratsen* then instruct the *Montsai* (soul caller), usually an old man, and the sick person to go to the place he indicated to perform the appropriate sacrifices. The *Ratsen* is also called in to remove poison from the head and stomach of the people, and since the people had faith in him, it actually brings relief to the pain stricken people. (Interview with Merithung odyuo. Wokha, 20:12:2012). Penathung Ngulli of Longla village narrated that Pithungo, the *Ratsen* of Niroyo village cured him of a severe headache by drawing out blood from his head (Interview). The ratsen not only diagnose but also prescribe herbal medicines, which are supposed to have been revealed to him in dreams or while in a trance. For wounds, the shoots of a type of bush called *nungnung* is crushed and applied. For weakness, a bat's flesh is prescribed, for diarrhoea, roasted goat's hoof and gall of cow or pig, and for intestinal diseases gall of a python are prescribed. Whisks of the dog which had bitten the man are burned and put on the wounds and for stomach pain, leaves of lemon is put on the effected portion.



The Lothas believe that the soul of the *Ratsen* could turn into leopard or tiger which they call *sonyuo*. If his *sonyuo* is killed, the *ratsen* fall sick and eventually dies. The fits from which a *ratsen* suffers are believed to be in some way connected with his *sonyuo*.

## FETISH AND MAGIC

The animistic belief of the primitive people made them to believe in the use of Fetish and magic to control the power of the spiritual forces and use them for their own advantage. The term 'fetish' is derived from the Latin 'facticius' and the Portuguese word 'feitico' which meant an amulet. The Portuguese adventurers first used the word when they saw these practices among the primitive people. John. A. Hardon described a fetish as "a common object of no value in itself but which the primitive keeps and venerates because he believes it is the dwelling- place of a spirit". (vol-1,196:33). A fetish may be a stone, wood, skull, hair or any other object for that matter, but these objects are powerless without the presence of the spiritual powers.

The Lothas practiced the keeping of a fetish stone which they called *oha* (luck stone). These *oha* were smooth pebbles which they keep in the *Mengkitong* (Head tree, usually a banyan tree which every village must have for ritual purpose). They also keep them at the foot of the posts of *chumpo* (*morung*), or by individuals in their houses or granaries. They are of varying size and significance. The large ones (usually the size of a man's head) are believed to bring fortune to the whole village and thus kept under the *menkitong*, the head tree and maintained by the village authority. Those kept in the *Chumpo* (*morung*) affect the prosperity of the particular *morung* inmates, the smaller ones kept by the individual families as luck stones are supposed to bring good harvest, beautiful children, blessing of wild animals and domestic animals and success in warfare . The *Ratsen* (seer) are believed to keep the *oha*

inside their head. The *oha* which brings luck in trade are kept with the money and the rice *oha* is kept in the granary. *Oha* are treated with great respect and in the various ceremonies of the Lothas, the people make small offerings of meat to the *oha* too.

Among the Lothas, stones with peculiar or curiously shaped appearance are liable to become objects of superstitious awe. Stone celts are regarded as thunderbolts from heaven. The Lothas regard them with some awe and oaths are taken on it. They call them *Potsow pvu* (God's axe). There is a story about a stone called *Matishi* which gives rain. According to Lilanthung Lotha, 'a man and his mithun went for a journey but on their way the Mithun died because they could not find water to drink, and it turned into a big boulder. This boulder came to be called *Matishi* and lies between Akuk and Lakhuti village. It is said that the Mithun left a footmark on the stone which the Lothas call *Tssiro khosu* (mithun tract). At one point of time, rain did not come after the seeds were sown, so the old men of Akuk village went to this place, cleaned the Mithun's footprint and poured water over the *matishi* (stone). Rain came as the old men were proceeding along the path to their village singing *khothesanga* which means 'Let there be rain'. (Lotha,1993:28).

There is a legend about *Longsio* (long stone) which fled from an Ao village called Aliba. One day the villagers killed a pig and went tracking the stone. On finding the stone, offerings of meat was given and the stone was asked to follow them. But it refused to go back telling them that it had occupied a good place. It is said that the Lothas paid great respect to this stone, and the people of Pangti village used to take oath on this stone. It is believed that the guilty would go mad if they take oath on this stone holding an egg. When the village menfolk went out for a game, they used to see a mark on this stone supposed to be left the *sukhingo*, the jungle spirit. Their hunting trip is successful if they see a mark on the stone made by this deity who sharpen his dao (machete) on this stone. The Lothas tells a story that a piece of *phitson long* was brought to Pangti village from Kezakhenoma, broken off from the

stone which miraculously increase paddy dried on it. According to Lilanthung Lotha, it is in the possession of Tsensao odyuo of Pangti village, and the odyuo clan of Pangti made offerings of meat and rice to it for good harvest. *Tiyulong* is another stone on which the Akuk and Lakhuti villagers considered sacred, and on which solemn oaths were taken. Similar veneration of stones is also attested among many civilized people. In the Old Testament (Isaiah 7:6) the Hebrews are reproved for pouring libations and bringing food offerings to smooth stones. (Clemen, 2005:25-26).

Tradition says that the *Yantung* (big knife or dao) believed to have used by *Ramphan*, the legendary hero, to kill the tiger which killed nine women at Tiyi Longchum is retained by the Tsopoe clan of Akuk village in Wokha. It is believed that the Lotha ancestors lived in Tiyi Longchum for many years until they were forced to migrate to other places due to shortage of water and fear of the tiger( kikon,2007,03).The graves of the nine women killed by the tiger still exists in a place called Longhanchu, between the present Yanthamo and Yimkha village. (Interview with Penathung Ngulli, Longla village, 05:06:1013). This object (*Yantung*) is believed to possess spiritual powers and the Tsopoe clan performed offering of meat to it before harvest every year for longevity and good harvest for the clan. Ceremonial display of the *yantung* was held every thirty years, on the occasion of which every male of the clan gathered to look at it with the belief that it would bring good fortune.(Lotha,1993:28).

The above shows that the Lothas believed in the power of fetishes. However, it may be noted that this practice of the Lothas could not amount to stone worship or worship of inanimate things (non-Living things) in any symbolical sense. Of themselves, these objects are powerless, but what makes them powerful and sacred is the presence of the spiritual powers. So the animistic belief of the primitive Lothas made them to take these objects as the supposed home of a spirit, or as in some sense a vehicle of power. Thus, for the primitive Lothas, fetishes effectively brought about contact between them and the divine beings.

Besides the use of fetishes, the use of magic played a great role among the primitive people in their effort to come in touch with the spiritual realities. Among the Lothas, magic is used by the *Ratsen* (seer) to diagnose, treat and heal the evils in people and society. However, witchcraft and sorcery in the evil sense or black magic was not prevalent among the Lothas. As mills writes; “witchcraft, in the evil sense of the word was never common among the Lothas, though the practice used to exist of making a straw image of an enemy in another village, and after addressing it by name spearing it. This, however, could never be done by one Lotha to another”. (Mills, 1922:168). Supernatural magic or black magic with its own form of worship, incantations, rites, sacrifices and special meeting places, practiced with the intention to bait, bewitch or poison, thereby effecting the individual and the society, as may be prevalent among other primitive people, was not practiced by the Lothas.

## DREAMS

The primitive Lothas attached great importance to *Omung* (Dreams), the office of which is normally held by a woman called *Havae*. She acts as a mediator between the souls of the dead and the living relatives. It is believed that in the dreams, the souls of the dead visit the living relatives. When a person dies, the family consults the *Havae* to know the will of the deceased. The family of the deceased prepares a sacrificial package of food and keeps it with the dreamer for the night. The soul of the deceased is believed to meet the dreamer in her dreams and communicate the will to her. Whenever, there occurs a prolonged illness or repeated deaths in a family it is believed that the spirits of the dead captivated the soul of the sick and a sacrifice called *Monso* (soul retrieval) is offered through the dreamer.(Murry,1976:8) *Echui- eni* ( placating the spirit of the dead) is performed through the *Havae* when there occurs constant illness of someone in the family.

Dreams are taken as symbolical and taken to the *Havae* or old men and women to be interpreted. Anything of red color in dreams is regarded as blood and therefore foretell accidental deaths in the family of the dreamer or in the village. Water symbolizes crops, and therefore dreaming of a deep pool means a good harvest. But a dry pond means a lean harvest. Dreaming of one's teeth falling out meant a death of the person or family members. If a man dreams that he is carrying a child along the Road of the Dead the child will die, and the dreamer may die too. But to dream that he is driven back by the dead souls means that he will have a long life, for the souls of those who had gone before are not yet ready to receive him. (Mills, 1922:171). To kill a chicken in a dream is bad because the chicken seen is the soul of that chicken which will be killed at the dreamer's death not long after. The Lothas believed that the only way of averting the fate ahead is by performing sacrifices by killing a pig or a dog and giving the meat to the *Havae*, the professional dreamer, who offers it to the souls of the dead in her dreams.

Among the Lothas, religion is so intertwined with their everyday life that distinction cannot be made between the sacred and the secular. Every dimension of their life is linked with the invisible world of the spirits. They believe that their existence on the earth is not in their hands but it depends on the supernatural, and this feeling developed an attitude of fear towards the divine beings. Therefore, their religious belief is guided by efforts to appease the supernatural to get tangible results. Hence, their approach to religion is utilitarian and egoistic. It is utilitarian in the sense that they wanted to be on the safer side as far as the divine beings are concerned, as displeasing them may not be good for them. It is egoistic in the sense that preserving themselves from the wrath of the supernatural becomes their main religious concern. The prayers, rituals and sacrifices offered are characterized by selfish motives. The study brings to light that their motives are obtaining food, victory over enemies, averting evil and illness. There is also a great deal of materialism inherent in their religion, because the

motive behind their prayers and sacrifices are for obtaining material gains or favor from the deities. Again that is the reason why great care is always taken to appease the spirits to ward off their malignancy. Their religion aimed at life, fertility, prosperity, harmony between people and spirits in this world rather than the next. There is also little speculation about the origin and nature of the cosmos.

Though fear is the basis of their religion, we also find that their attitude towards the Supreme Being is not one of fear. They considered the Supreme Being as one who cared for them as a father would to his children, and attributes many moral qualities to him. The Supreme Being is the one they would call upon in all the significant moment of their life, and offer him prayers and thanks for his goodness. Moreover, throughout the different seasons and stages of life, they establish rituals and ceremonies to keep in touch with the supernatural. What people in the west would regard as typically secular, such as planting and harvesting crops, is closely connected to religious understanding among the Lothas. The fundamental concern of the Lotha religion with health and well- being are expressed through rituals. These religious ceremonies built up genuine bonds among the people of the village, clan and family. Festivals, feasts, dances and songs celebrate communal existence. Because religion focuses on communal well- being, the Lothas were not much concerned with eschatological concepts. For them the past and the present find their meaning in the present. Since their religious activity focuses on how positive benefits for society can be enhanced, the Lotha traditional religion is a form of humanism, which is a communal humanism and not individualistic. Therefore, in spite of the limitations, there is also a great deal of richness in them. Though they are primitive in their nature and expressions, the Lotha religion is pragmatic, concerning themselves with securing and maintaining material advantages which promote the well- being of the community as a whole.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY**

The traditional religion of the Lothas which has been termed as ‘animism’ has been supplanted by Christianity from the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the Lothas are predominantly Christians. The Christian population of the District account for about 95 percent, out of which 85 percent are Baptists. As per the census of 2010 of the Kyong Baptist Ekhumkho Sanrhyutsu KBES (The Lotha Baptist Churches Association), the Lotha Baptist Association has 121 affiliated Churches with total Baptized members of about 59,856. Besides the Baptists there are also Christians of other denominations who had established Churches and Schools in the Lotha area. Nevertheless, for more than half a century, the Baptist community remained as one body. It was during this period, from the 1880s to the early 1950s that the American Baptist missionaries, along with the new faith brought education, thereby bringing about revolutionary transformation and a new awakening. As the American Baptist Missionaries were the pioneers of the Christian Mission and modern Education in the area, the bulk of the present chapter deals with the ecclesiastical history of the Baptist Mission and the Baptist Churches during the period 1880 to 1950 which T. Kikon calls “ the Age of Awakening”( 1993:09) of the Lothas.

### **EARLY MISSION TO THE NAGA HILLS**

Christianity was introduced to the Nagas in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. From the year 1813, American missionaries started coming to India. The removal of the ban on Missionary activity by the inclusion of the

clause in the Charter of the East India Company in that year encouraged American missionary activity in India. But it was not until the British annexation of Assam under the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 that Christianity was allowed to penetrate among the native people. By 1830 onwards a greater flow of American missionaries to India began. It was during the same decade that the attention of the American Baptist Foreign Missionary union was directed toward the hill tribes of Assam.

At the close of the Burman war in 1826 Assam was a part of the British dominion. In fact, the idea of mission in Assam was developed not by a missionary but by a political officer. Captain Francis Jenkins, the then Commissioner General of Assam was interested in establishing mission among the people of Assam. He found that the Kamptis at Sadiya were not only a nuisance, but treacherous, tricky and Demon worshippers. (Philips, 1972:50). He wrote to the American mission at Moulmein (Burma) for sending missionaries to work for the regeneration of the Hill tribes. (Pathak, 1967:40). The Baptist Foreign Missionary union gladly accepted the invitation and sent the Rev. Oliver T. Cutter as the first missionary to Assam in 1835. On their arrival in Sadiya, Assam on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 1836, Rev. Cutter and his family were cordially received by Captain Jenkins.

The American Baptist mission in Assam expanded gradually. In the 1840s stations were opened at Sibsagar, Nowgong and Gauhati in Assam. At Sibsagar station Dr. Edward Winter Clark arrived on 30<sup>th</sup> march 1869, entrusted by the American Baptist missionary union to look after the work of the printing press in Sibsagar, Assam. While in Sibsagar, Dr. Clark became acquainted with some Nagas who came to the Sibsagar Bazaar for trade and developed his vision to evangelize the Nagas. He was in fact, from the very first strongly drawn to them. (Sword, 1992: 106). Mrs M. M. Clark wrote; “A Man from Merangkong, a village in the Ao Naga tribe, while living in Sibsagar was baptized in 1851 by Rev. S. M Whiting. This man while on a visit to his native village was killed in a hostile attack. This was



all that was done toward giving the gospel to the Nagas previous to the undertaking of Mr Clark.” (1907: 05).

Attempt to evangelize the Nagas was also made in Namsang village, (Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh and now Tuensang District of Nagaland together comprised the NEFA. In 1957, Tuensang district was separated from NEFA to join the Naga Hills Tuensang Area.), by Miles Bronson when he toured the foothills during 1838 to 1840. Miles Bronson established a Christian Mission Centre at Namsang village in 1839. He built a house at Namsang village and arrived with his wife and sister, Rhoda Bronson on March 14, 1840. They opened a primary school, during which Bronson prepared a spelling book for the Singphos and Nagas. He also prepared a catechism in Naga language called ‘*Natahema Heran Kabanva Nyapran*’ which is the first book to be written in a Naga language. (NBCC Platinum jubilee, 2012:12 ). However Bronson’s family was obliged to return to Jaipur due to health reasons after eight months of stay without converting anyone.

Though the Naga mission was abandoned they succeeded in making some contact with the Namsangias who came down to the plains of Assam for trade purposes and a few Nagas were converted from time to time. The first Naga convert was Baptized on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1847 by Nathan Brown at Sibsagar. He was Hube but he died on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1847. (Sangma, 1987:268). The second Naga to receive Christ was Longjang Lepzuk, an Ao Naga from Merangkong Village. (Philips, 1976:53). He was baptized by the Rev. S. W. Whiting on September 7, 1851. He became a member of the Sibsagar Church. But when he went to his village intending to bring a wife, his village was attacked by a neighboring Naga tribe and he was killed. The third Naga to receive baptism was Yahukonsi Sarah Caldwell. Baptized on January 4, 1852 she became a member of the Nowgong Church. The Namsang Naga Mission was abandoned for about thirty years, from 1840 to 1870, until Rev. E. W.

Clark came to Sibsagar in 1869, and restarted the Naga Mission from another Naga region called Dekha Haimong (Molungyimsen).

The pioneer missionaries had to couple zeal with an adventurous spirit during the early days in Assam. Many hardships were encountered by them because of the resistance and hostility of the native people. A case in point was the incident of January 28, 1839, when the kamptis attacked Sadiya. Colonel White and eighty others were brutally slain in the assault. (Philip, 1972:50). In 1855, when two Konyak men, namely Aklong Konyak and Amlai Konyak of Namsang baptized by Dr. Brown at Sibsagar returned to their village preaching the gospel of God, the leaders of the village fearing that the new religion would create confusion in the minds of the people and turn the village 'upside down', and for the sake of 'Peace and order' in the village they were exterminated. (Philip, 1972:50). Head hunting as a part of Naga culture was rampant among the Naga tribes and the villages then. The land of the Nagas was inaccessible not only due to geographical difficulties but also due to the risk of losing one's head literally, if one go up to the hills. Thus the mission work among the Nagas did not progress much till 1871.

#### DR. CLARK'S MISSION 1872

Dr. Edward Winter Clark, the first American Baptist missionary to the Naga Hills arrived in Sibsagar, Assam on 30<sup>th</sup> march 1869. Initially he was entrusted to look after the work of the printing press in Sibsagar by the American Baptist missionary union. Here, Clark came to know of Naga traders who walked down to the Assam Plains with baskets of goods for trade. Clark was curious and interested in these tribesmen with Mongolian features and developed his vision to evangelize the Nagas. Among the Naga barter traders was Subongmeren, an Ao Naga from the village of Dekahaimong (Molungyimsen) who was

approached by an Assamese evangelist by the name of Godhula Rufus Brown. Subongmeren lived with Godhula and his wife Lucy from December 1870 till 1871. He was baptized in early 1871 by Dr. Clark at Sibsagar. He became the first contact person who paved the way for further evangelization of the Nagas. (Philips, 1972 :53).

The Assamese evangelist Godhula Rufus Brown, willing to risk his life volunteered to make the first venture into the Naga area, entered Dekahaimong ( Molungyimsen) in the Ao area in October 1871 but the villagers were not happy. He was suspected of being a British Spy. The village council discussed what should be done with him and they decided to ‘send him off’, ‘get him out of the way’, a spy, doubtless of the company.( Clark , 1907 :11). Clark too was suspected of being an agent of the company. It took some time for the people to understand the real motive of the missionaries in Nagaland. This was another obstacle the early missionaries faced. Nevertheless, Godhula’s venture did not go in vain and in November 1872, he returned from Dekahaimong (Molungyimsen) bringing with him the nine Nagas who were willing to embrace the new religion of love and peace, the first fruits of his faithful labor. These nine Nagas were baptized by Clark on November 11, 1872, and they were made members of the Sibsagar church. Braving the odds Clark himself arrived in Molung Yimsen, near Dekahaimong with the help of Godhula and Supongmeren. On December 18, 1872, 15 more Nagas were converted. On December 23, 1872, these converts along with nine baptized at Sibsagar were organized into a Branch church. Thus it became the first Naga Church. (Sangma, Vol-1, 1987:224). Dr. Clark established himself as the first missionary to the Naga Hills and served the Nagas for forty years between 1872 and 1911. Thus the first church in the Naga soil was planted. (Murry; 1976:11). This mission station was later shifted to Impur in 1894 which remains the mission centre for the Aos till date.

Dr. Clark also arranged to reach the other tribes from Impur. The decade 1887 to 1896 saw the humble beginning of evangelism and the growth of Church membership in the Naga hills. In addition to the Missionary activities of Dr. Clark at Molung in the Ao field, other missionaries were appointed to the other Naga tribes. On the initiative of Clark, in 1878, the American Overseas Missionary Board at Boston appointed Rev. C.D King to reinforce Dr.Clark in the Naga Hills. He established a mission centre at Kohima in 1880. Similarly, in early 1885, the Government granted permission to the American Mission to open another centre at Wokha, a British post almost equi-distant from both Kohima and Mokokchung. (Sema, 1992:72).

From their early observation of the Naga society, the British had realized the importance of propagating Christianity amongst the Naga tribes. Theological inspiration may not be the only explanation or motive of the missionary movement. Nevertheless, it is not the intention here or within the scope of the study to go in detail into the motivations that brought the American Baptist missionaries to come to these distant, unknown areas. Suffice it to say that they came with ample zeal, a singular direction of purpose, unflinching faith in the cause and relentless pursuance that attended the work of these early missionaries.

## THE LOTHIA MISSION

In retrospect, the arrival of the first missionary to the Lothia area in 1885 was truly a red letter day in the annals of Lothia history. The Lothias maintained their unique culture and religion for centuries despite the peripheral contact with the Hindus and Muslims of the plains of Assam to the west, with whom they traded. The retention of their culture and religion through centuries can be attributed to the mountainous features and practice of head hunting. Besides, the strong will of the people, their pride in their culture and their devotion and faith

in their religion were also undoubtedly major factors in the retention. The initial response to the new faith, was therefore, largely unreceptive.

The missionary occupation of Wokha, the third centre in Naga hills was possible with the initiation of Dr. Clark, who, during his ten months stay at Molungyimsen in 1876 exclaimed; “were the tidings of the Gospel of the prince of peace for the Aos alone? The spirit which said, ‘go ye into all the world’ did not allow his eyes to remain fixed upon his own field, they fell upon another people just as rude and savage”. He added, “A road is being made from the plains of Assam to Wokha. The political agent will probably occupy Wokha another year, when it will doubtless be safe place to live. Its height and location should give it a fine climate. Wokha is a large Naga village and other large villages are near. Let the other missionary family go there”. (Jubilee Conference, 1992: 89). As Dr. Clark predicted, an English political control was extended and a political agent Captain Butler was appointed. It was unfortunate that the brave captain fell victim to the ‘ hostile and warlike spirit of these people’ as Dr. Witter later wrote, “ his successor was at once appointed and a sub- divisional officer with a native military force was in command making Wokha a comparatively safe place for mission work” .( Jubilee conference,1992:89).

W.E. Witter and Mr. H.P. Moore knowing the importance of occupying Wokha station at an early date visited Molung and discussed the matter with Dr. Clark and Mr. Rivenburg. In the meeting Clark said, “If the Witters will occupy Wokha at once, I will give the missionary union a special gift of Rupees 500 to solve the expense of their transfer, and I feel thoroughly convinced that such an act will meet the hearty consent of the brethren at Boston”. (Jubilee conference report 1992:90). Accordingly, a telegram was sent to the Deputy Commissioner at Kohima requesting permission to occupy Wokha. Having received a favorable reply, preparation was made to transfer Dr. Witter to Wokha from Sibsagar. The journey to Wokha commenced on March 31, 1885. They reached Wokha tea garden on April 7, where they were

met by C.D King of Kohima with many sepoys and hundred Naga coolies to escort the Witters to the new mission stations. (Philips 1972: 100). Dr Witter and his wife arrived at Wokha on the morning of April 9, 1885. With the arrival of Witter and his wife, the process of evangelization among the Lothas began.

#### WITTER'S CONTRIBUTIONS

To Rev. W.E Witter and his wife goes the credit for many 'firsts' in the Lotha land. A missionary couple with a clear sense of direction, they could sense the suspicion and distrust of the local people but gradually through demonstrated love, they found the way to the hearts of the Lotha villagers. With zeal and dedication, Witter began the preparation of a script for the Lotha language which, hitherto, no attempt had been made by any European to speak or reduce it to writing. The Roman alphabet was adopted, giving it a phonetic structure by re-assigning the sounds represented by various letters. A new script was thus born by the labors of the Rev. Dr. Witter, assisted by his wife, to a language which, hitherto was only spoken. Thus, slowly, new windows to the vistas of knowledge in the world around were opened to the Lothas. This landmark in the beginning of the Lotha literature had an unprecedented impact on the future of the Lothas. Thus Dr. Witter can be rightly called the father of Lotha literature and education.

The period of initial expansion of American missions in the Naga Hills was marked by important pioneering works on their part in several directions. In the beginning, their various activities supplemented each other. To proceed with their activities of evangelization, it was also necessary to spread education so that the Bible could be read and understood. The translation of the Bible to the language of the local tribes was also essential. As a result the missionaries were not only preachers and translators, but also educators and publishers.

Significant contributions were made in these areas among the Lothas by Dr. Witter. In 1885, at Wokha Village, Dr. Witter and his wife started a school, heralding the beginning of education and educational institutions in the Lotha area. They bought a land by 50 Paise from Wokha village and constructed a small house for school. That was the first school in the Lotha area. (Ngullie. 1994:110.) On 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1885, Mrs Witter gathered several boys and began the first formal teaching of Christian truth to the Lotha Nagas. (Jubilee conference report, 1992:91).

In addition to the study of the Lotha language, Dr. Witter devoted some time to the further pursuit of the Assamese, and which was an indispensable medium of communication to spread the gospel. A Sunday school class for sepoy and bazaar children, who were of mixed races, but all understood Assamese was also started by February 1886. The Assamese preacher H. Daniel Baruah perhaps helped Dr and Mrs. Witter at Wokha, as Baruah wrote in his letter to America in 1887 thus, “I am trying to do what I can to bring the gospel of our blessed Lord to the Lotha Nagas. I hope you will pray for Mr Witter and myself, and also for boys in our school, as well as for all these people. None of them has as yet received Christ as their savior”. (Murry (ed), 1979: 17). A day school was opened on August 25, 1886, with three Lotha boys who were employed as servants by the Witters. The number subsequently increased to seven. In the daily session of one hour to one and a half hour, the boys were given Bible instruction as also they were taught to read and write their own language, the Roman character having been adopted. The first catechism in Assamese, with the exception of the Lord’s Prayer was translated into Lotha language. Witter also prepared a first primer. In the school, Witter himself taught the boys. He reported in 1887, “I taught the school myself, and in the two months that the school was kept, the catechism was committed to memory, the primer mastered, and unfeigned joy in the work included”. (Murry (ed), 1979:18).

A considerable vocabulary was collected for a phrase book and samples of it were sent to Shillong to be examined by government officials. Upon examination they expressed their approval of the work and their willingness to publish the same at government expense. However, due to health problems, the Witters left for Kohima in may 1887, and remained with the Rivenburgs for almost a year. Nevertheless their work continued and just two days before they sailed for America in march 1888, an outline grammar book of the Lotha Language with a vocabulary appeared in print, published by the government of India. (Clark, 1907: 154). The Outline Grammar, was for many years the only attempt to reduce the language to writing and which constituted for a long time the sum total of Lotha literature. (Sword, 1992: 114). Mrs. Witter translated the Assamese catechism into Lotha and also the first hymn, “*Jihova emong nchuk*”, in the tune of ‘there is a happy land’. (Okotso Baptist Church Motsu, 2004:97). A portion of the New Testament was also translated by Mrs. Witter but could not publish it.

The school work was not very encouraging in the beginning, as Witter wrote, “To get these savages to attend school, we must at least give them their rice; for the parents have as yet no desire that their children be taught to read and write, and would as soon throw their rice in the fire as to send it to the station for the support of a boy in the school”. (Murry (ed), 1979: 19). The school closed soon with only those in attendance who were employed as servants. Witter also reported of the reluctance by the parents to send their children to the school because of their religious scruples. Children who ran away to be present in the school were punished by detaining them at home. Some were forbidden to pray aloud in their homes.

Proselytization too made a slow start. Witter himself said, “No conversion or baptism of any Lotha is found”. (Lotha Baptist Churches Association Golden Jubilee Souvenir. 1973:1). Daniel Baruah wrote in his letter to America in 1887, “None of them has as yet received Christ as their savior” (Murry, (ed) 1979:17). Nevertheless the groundwork has been



done. In 1888, Dr. Witter and his wife left for America to seek medical treatment and they did not return to the mission field at Wokha. Dr. Witter came back in 1922 with a medical degree, but worked in Gauhati till 1923. He returned to America and served as pastor in Lake Avenue Church, Rochester till his death in November 1931. (Lotha Churches Association History, 1998:9).

## NON- RESIDENT MISSIONARIES

After the departure of the Witters in 1888, the annual missionary report on the Lothas remained blank for ten years. During that period even the school works came to a standstill. Dr. Clark reported, 'as there was no missionary at Wokha during 1889-1893, the schools were not continued'. (Murry, (ed) 1979:20) Dr. Clark continuously requested the home board to provide a missionary for the Lotha tribe. Non- resident missionaries from Impur and Kohima were arranged to meet the urgent needs of the Lothas.

Rev. F.A Haggard was designated to take charge of the Lotha area along with the work at Impur between October 27, 1896 and December 31, 1897. He began the study of the Lotha language using the Grammar prepared by Dr. Witter. But he was transferred to Impur because of financial position. Other non- resident missionaries were entrusted from time to time to look after the Wokha mission. In 1900, Rev. S. W. Rivenburg took charge of the Lotha work in addition to the Kohima field. Rev. W.F. Dowd, from Impur took additional charge of the Lothas in 1902. Rev. S.A. Perrine worked on the Lotha from Gauhati till 1904. (Murry, 1976:33).

It was not until the arrival of Dr. Bailey that a permanent mission centre was established in the Lotha area. He secured permission to purchase land in Wokha from the

SDO of Mokokchung and purchased the present Vankhosung Mission Compound. Howard and Harriet Houston fondly remembered him as they recalled, “Dr. Bailey bargained with the shrewed Wokha villagers for a piece of land beyond the village known as Vankhosung and bought thirty two (32) acres which became the Vankhosung mission compound. On top of the hill Dr. Bailey planned to build their home, and he made the rock retaining walls for the foundation around which he planted small cedar trees. But in a short time, he died of typhoid fever contracted from drinking tea into which unboiled water had been poured. Today the cedar trees are lovely and tall, shading the ball field where the Bible school students play”. (1987:05). In memory of the works he had done for the Lothas, when the Wokha Town Baptist Church (WTBC) sponsored college was established in 2006 at Wokha, it was christened in his name.

Besides the above mentioned missionaries, there were other non- resident missionaries who worked for the evangelization of the Lothas. Rev and Mrs R.P.Longwell stayed in Impur and looked after the Lothas from 1920- 1926. All the annual reports on the Lothas were given by him from Impur. The first report of Rev. J.E Tanquist on the Lothas is seen in 1937 and the last report in 1947. During his time Lotha literature was improved and the New Testament was released in 1943. Rev B.I. Anderson reported on the Lotha work in 1941. He took charge of the Lotha work in the absence of Rev Tanquist. He built the Bible school building in the upper Vankhosung. During his time the translation of the New Testament started. (Lotha churches Association history, 1998:21). Stationed at Kohima, G.W.Suplee looked after the Lothas from 1935- 36 .The Houstons were the last missionaries who lived with the Lothas during 1948- 1953.

The contribution of these non- resident missionaries to the Lothas is summed up by the Howard and Harriet Houston in the following words, “The first school in the Lotha

country was built by Bengt Anderson at Vankhosung. Although Bengt was a Sema Naga missionary and lived in Impur, he was in charge of the Lotha work for a time. Then Mr. Tanquist helped the Lothas from Kohima in addition to his work with the Angamis and other tribes. Both Mr. Anderson and Dr. Tanquist arranged for the printing of small school books and Bible stories, and in the early days of World war two, Mr. Tanquist supervised the printing of the first edition of the Lotha New Testament. Others, too, had helped the Lothas. Mr. Longwell had opened a school for Lotha boys on the plains. There was a time during World war two when Mr. Supplee of Kohima was in- charge of all the Naga work. Through the years the Supplees trained many Lotha boys in the mission school in Kohima”. (1987:5)

These non- resident missionaries were helped by local Christians in their work of the translation of the Bible into the Lotha Language. With the help of N. L. Kinghen, Ashio Ovung, Chumdemo Murry, Shanjamo jungi, and others, by 1940, the gospel of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John were translated for the Lothas. The Rev. Bengt Anderson wrote in 1937, “At the time of one of my visits to Impur during the year, I discovered a manuscript of the Gospel of Mark, translated by Chumdemo into the Lotha Language. I packed this bundle of handwritten sheets with my luggage and took it to Kohima. On my visits to Wokha I read it and revised it with Chumdemo’s help and typed it hoping to have it printed. But the strict rule laid down by the Bible Society prohibited first term missionaries from getting any translations printed. In my determination to get it into the hands of the people I printed fifty copies on an old discarded duplicator. The Lotha workers received this first portion with great enthusiasm”. (2008:08). Later, it was published by the Bible society under the supervision of Rev. J. E. Tanquist. He was helped by Ashio Ovung in the translation of other portions of the Bible. In 1946, the first edition of the New Testament was completed by Rev. Anderson and Rev. Tanquist with the help of Ashio Ovung. The translation of the Old Testament was also started by Tssidenshio Tsanglao, which was later completed by Rev. Ellis Murry with the help

of C. Patton and Rev. A. Patton. It was printed in October, 1968. (Lotha Baptist Churches History).

#### HOWARD AND HARRIET HOUSTON 1947- 53

Although the Lothas were helped from the beginning by the non- resident missionaries, they always felt like step children. They constantly prayed and requested for a missionary family who would come and reside among them. After twenty five long years of praying, and never giving up hope, the Rev and Mrs Houston arrived. Before he was called to missionary service Howard worked as Assistant pastor at Oregon. Approached by Dr. Osgood of Bengal and Orissa, to mission service, the Houstons gladly accepted. They were officially welcomed at the silver jubilee anniversary of the Lotha Baptist Association in January 1948 at Vankhosung, ‘dressed in Lotha clothes and made Lothas’. (Lotha Baptist Church History: 9)

Rev and Mrs. Houston, during their short stay in Vankhosung from 1948- 1953, contributed much for the upliftment of the Lothas. Besides their work of evangelism and educating the people, the missionaries trained them in personal hygiene and provided medical care. They wrote in 1948, “Although we told the Lothas we were not medical people, still they come to us for help. Everyday Harriet had a ‘back door dispensary’. They came with everything: Cracked callouses on the feet, horrible Naga sore, itch, cuts, wounds, goiters, ulcers, measles and it was wonderful to see how many were helped, some with the miracle drugs and others with soda mints”. (Houston,1987:13).The back door dispensary opened many opportunities to witness for Christ to the non Christians and it was a good way to build good will.

Harriet also taught the women the importance of cleanliness and sanitation. Each year she taught the girls in the women’s training school some basic lessons in cleanliness, home

nursing and child care. Child mortality was high then and many women died in childbirth. T.B too was prevalent. Almost all the people suffered from dysentery and malaria. Usually they gave out the medicines freely to those who need it. The Lothas were slow to send their girls to the mission hospitals for nurses training but slowly girls were sent to Jorhat and Kohima for nurses training.

The Houstons were the harbinger of women education and vocational training among the Lothas. After getting acquainted with the Lothas they realized that it was the women who needed help as they were the most backward. They decided to start a training school for women but there was no one qualified to be the teacher. After searching for a teacher they remembered Zanponi, who lived in Jorhat with her family where her husband served as a policeman. Although she had little education, because of her determination she learnt Assamese from a hired tutor. She also attended women's Bible training in Jorhat. She was called to Vankhosung to help Mrs. Houston start the Lotha women's training school. Then each church in the villages were requested to send at least one girl of sixteen years or older with good moral character to the training school. But the men folk and the pastors were reluctant. They could not effort to take the women out of the fields and send them to school. Moreover they were to get married early.

The opening day of the women's training school had only one student. In two weeks time, however, seven girls enrolled for one year course. Zanponi and Harriet taught them life of Christ, the Christian women's work in her home, church and the village. The girls were also taught sewing and knitting and music. Personal hygiene and sanitation was also taught. The enrollment increased in the following years. Many girls became women leaders in their village churches and union meetings. Thus with the efforts of Mrs Houston and Zanponi, a new day dawned for the Lotha women. In the 1952 Lotha Christian Association held in

Rephyim village, over eight hundred (800) women attended, women who rose to a new life of service and responsibility because of knowing Christ.

In January 1950 Six Lotha women attended the Angami women's convention in Kohima. They came home inspired to establish their own Association. With little encouragement from the men, the Lotha women organized their Association. At the first meeting six hundred women attended. Harriet wrote, "At their second Association each local village women's society brought their handful of rice offerings and everyone was pleased when it amounted to over six hundred rupees. The men were surprised too, and at their first church council meeting decided to ask the women's Association for a contribution. The women refused. They wanted to support a women evangelist who would tour the villages preaching and teaching especially the women and children. A young woman, Orenyimi, who had finished the two year course in our Bible school volunteered and just before we left for furlough she began her work as the first women's worker supported by the Lotha women's Association." (Houston, 1987:37-38).

Thus the missionaries now provided theological education and training to the local Lothas so that they could assume leadership and evangelical work themselves. It may be added that persons trained by the missionaries were also found efficient in their work in the Government offices etc. Braving the difficulties, trials and tribulations, these early missionaries to the Lothas devoted themselves to the people with admirable perseverance. The Rev and Mrs. Houston left the Lothas in 1953, after having stayed five years and three months, only to return after twenty years to attend the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Lotha Naga Baptist Association held on February 16- 18 of 1973, where 86 churches with baptized membership of 12,435 attended. It was held at Vankhosung. Attended by five thousand Lotha Baptist Christians, the theme of the jubilee was "Ye shall be my witnesses". The Houstons made the following concluding remarks; "Perhaps now it is our turn as

American Baptist to learn again this great truth from our ‘children’ in the faith who are now mature in the lord”. (1987:66).

## THE NATIVE EVANGELISTS

It would be incomplete if mention is not made about the works done by the native missionaries who helped and worked with the American missionaries in the Naga Hills and also among the Lothas. The important role played by Godhula Babu in the formative years of the Naga mission should not be minimized. He was called ‘John the Baptist’ for the Naga mission. (Purtoshi, 1991:21). He was an Assamese ardent evangelist and school teacher who volunteered to make the first venture. In April 1872, Godhula and his wife Lucy, a former pupil in Mrs Whiting’s school, started for the hills. Godhula came into contact with some Naga men who went to the plains for trade. At Amguri tea garden too, Godhula met many men from Dekhahaimong (Molungyimsen) village and shared with them his rice, smoked and talked with them, and gradually gained the confidence of the Hill men. With the bold venture of Godhula, a successful Christian ministry among the Nagas was inaugurated. On December 18, 1872, Godhula along with Dr. Clark made a trip to Dekha haimong. The same year, fifteen men were baptized, marking the first Baptismal service ever held in Nagaland, and a humble beginning of the Naga church.

Robi Babu was another Assamese preacher in Impur. He was sent to Wokha to assist Dr and Mrs Witter from October 1885 to April 1886. In 1887, he returned to Wokha, during which he took initiative to send Lotha boys and girls to Impur for study. This was a great achievement because these students later became the backbone of the Lotha churches. In 1902, the first native baptism took place at Wokha with several young men. Regarding the

education of the Lotha Nagas, the report of 1903 mentioned that Robi, the Assamese teacher lived at Wokha and tried to carry on the mission works. (Sangma, 1987: 219).

In December 1896, Zilli, an Assamese preacher and teacher among the Aos was posted at Wokha station. He visited the mission field at Wokha and made arrangement for the removal of his family to Wokha, but he was suddenly taken ill and died on Christmas day.

## LOTHA RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

Proselytization made a slow start among the Lothas. About the initial response of the hill tribes to the new faith F. S. Downs wrote that, “The first conversion must have posed many psychological problems and barrier. Opposition became stronger and at times became threatening. Every Baptism was a signal for renewed antagonism. The Christians were not allowed to build churches inside the villages, fearing that it may offend the spirits and bring misfortune to the people”. (1971 : 125). So also the Christians all over the Lotha area were persecuted. The new converts in the villages were not allowed to stay in the family nor in the village. They were ex- communicated. They were even forbidden to drink water from the same village pond or to use the same pathway to go to the field. At any misfortune coming to the village, like epidemic, the Christians were blamed. The initial opposition was formidable with the entire traditional society pitted against the missionaries, and in many occasion the converts had to face the wrath of his family as well as of his fellow villagers.

Cases in point: Evangelist Chijamo of Pyangsa village was expelled from his village by order of the Government, on demand of the villagers, for embracing the new faith. In other cases, the entire Christian community was ex-communicated from their villages. The new converts at pongitong village were forced to go to a village called Mangasa (now abandoned), a few miles north- west of pongitong. Chenchio Ovung, the first educated man from



pongitong village and a pioneer Lotha Christian faced untold hardship and persecution at the hands of the non- Christian villagers of Pongitong. His step- father was struck by a deadly disease and was miraculously healed when he embraced Christianity in 1925. Another four more families joined them, all from the Ovung Clan, and so the non-christian villagers mocked them by calling their faith as Ovung religion. In course of time, there were also converts from other Clans in the village. However, they were banished from the main village and had to establish two new villages for out-caste Christians. (Pongitong Jubilee Souvenir).

Chenchio Ovung and his step father were summoned to the court of the Deputy Commissioner, J. P. Mills, to hear grievances against them by the Dobashi, Goanbura and three elders. Some of the accusations labeled against the Christians were that they slashed the neck of chicken and other domestic animals, a method of blood sacrifice to appease the spirits in the animistic belief; they brew tea and ring bells during Church services which drive away blessings from the village; and they hate non- Christians and always insult and make fun of them. The D.C did not find the reasons grave enough to expel the Christians from the village. An elder by the name of Hacha stood up and claimed angrily that the Christians hated and insulted them, and threatened that if the Christians were not expelled, the non- Christians would leave the village. The Dobashi who acted as the interpreter lied to the D.C that the previous DC, J.H.Hutton had passed an order forbidding Christians from slaughtering animals by slashing the neck, brewing tea in the kheti( field) and ringing the bell. (NBCC Platinum jubilee,2012:200). The DC, not wanting to overrule the order passed by his predecessor, ordered the Christians of Pongitong to find a new location for a Christian village on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1930.

The next day was the exodus of the Christians of Pongitong, who went and established a new village called Mangasa. Lotha Churches from other villages came forward to help by clearing the jungle and building thatch huts. After five months, the village was abandoned

because of environmental problems. The villagers began to fall ill and die. Their Church leader, Yanshungo Ovung died on 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1931. Chenchio, who was studying in Impur Mission School, had to return to Mangasa to take charge of the Church. Due to severe water and soil contamination, 14 out of 24 Christians in Mangasa died.

The Christians requested the Pvuti (priest) of Pongitong to allow them to return to the village or provide for them an alternative site. The traditional society pitted against them. A regulation had already been made to impose a fine on any villager who converts to the new faith. It was only when the DC intervened that the traditional priest grudgingly earmarked a site called Longpyak for the Christians. Thus, after Mangasa village was abandoned, Longpyak village was founded in 1937. For ten years the Christians lived there, until in 1947, after paying a fine of 30Kgs of pork, the converts were allowed to return to the mother village, Pongitong, because the village was not ideal for human survival.

Meanwhile Chenchio was appointed as a teacher in the Government LP School, Pongitong in 1943. Thathungo Ovung took up the leadership of the Church as well as Goanbura of Longpyak village. (Pongitong Jubilee Souvenir). Within five years of Chenchio's posting at Pongitong, the villagers started abandoning their traditional religion and converted to Christianity. Soon a complaint was lodged against the Christians to P.F. Adams, the then SDO, Mokokchung. They were accused of eating the tiger meat which was a taboo meat and a curse. To justify the case, Chongkhu, an animist volunteered to swear by the teeth of a tiger. The SDO was then compelled to order the Christians to leave Pongitong with a fine of Rupees 15.

In Longsa village, the villagers persisted in their animistic belief until the 1950s. In 1931, when the SDO of Mokokchung visited the village, the villagers and the GB (Guanbura) made it clear to him that the village would not allow the penetration of foreign religion into their land. They made a resolution that converts would be liable to pay a fine of fifty (50)

Rupees. Conversion would also entail expulsion from the village. During that period, a Lotha evangelist Chichamo of pyangsa village came to the village preaching the gospel and incidentally, the first convert made in this village was Nchanrhomo the Guanbura, who earlier announced the restrictions on converts. Accordingly, he was made to pay a fine of fifty Rupees, and expelled from the village in 1931. He lived in Wokha village until his death in 1938. (Longsa Baptist Church History, 1974: 03). It was only in 1950 that the first church was established in Longsa.

The leaders of the villages thought that the new religion would create confusion in the minds of the people and turn the village upside down (Clark, 1907: 17). Therefore, Christianity met a stiff resistance from the animists in the beginning. The response of the Lothas towards the new religion is described by M.M. Clark thus, which is worth quoting in full; “Glorifying in their independence, these savage hill men were utterly opposed to any movement that foreshadowed in the least any alliance whatever with this great and ever-encroaching power. Adherents of the old cruel faith were quick to see that the gospel of peace and love would rapidly empty their skull houses and put to rout most of the old customs handed down from forefathers, for whom they held the greatest reverence. The missionary’s presence and his teachings had spread like wild fire from mountain peak to mountain peak and everywhere was fostered the suspicious spirit. Hostility to the new religion waxed stronger and stronger. There was a division in the village councils; repeated efforts were made by the opponents of Christianity to inveigle their village into war with other villages, and thus to overwhelm by a strong war spirit the influence of the few Christians, whose teachings were so antagonistic to their military ambition, without the realization of which there could be for them no social or political standing in the community, and for which they would willingly imperil life. To intimidate the missionary, a war party of young men ambushed one whole week for human heads, which they intended to throw down before him as symbolical of what

he might expect himself in case he did not retreat to the plains. They returned, however, without the booty, but racked with fever, thus affording the missionary an opportunity of exercising some medical skill and taming their savagery". (1907: 17).

There was hostility from the traditional society headed by the village *pvuti* (priest). A blatant case was the event of Okotso Village. By order of the British administration, the Christians of Okotso were exempted from paying taxes to the Village chief priest. When Rev Longwell visited Okotso in 1907, some of the village chieftains wanted to show their displeasure over the matter, and refused to talk to him facing each other. In spite of his repeated plea, they told him to say what he wanted to say, as they were able to hear from behind also. On his return journey to Impur, the missionary reported about the incident to the SDO of Mokokchung, who summoned the two chieftains to see him at Chungliyimsen. Although they dared to insult the missionary, they had no other choice but to rush for Chungliyimsen, which is more than 40 miles through thick jungle. When they reached the place, the sahib had left for Lakhuti, another 35 miles away. The sahib asked them to meet him there. Without proper food or rest they rushed to Lakhuti the next day, but on reaching it they found that the sahib had left for Merapani. They were ordered to see the sahib there. They resumed their trekking through thick jungle. At last they met him there and expected severe punishment for their incivility but the sahib simply told them to go to Impur and beg apology from the missionary. Their marathon trekking took five days covering not less than 250 miles. With shame they met the missionary and told him whether he would forgive him. The missionary gladly forgave them and sent them back.

In 1909, Rev. Longwell visited Okotso to baptize 23 new believers. Having done the baptism they were getting ready to start the worship service when some villagers gathered in a spot and began shouting. Rev. Longwell took it casually thinking that such was the usual practice of the Nagas. But when no one dared to come to the Church, and the gathering grew

bigger, the missionary sensed something. It is interesting to quote the experience of Rev R. B Longwell in the village of Okotso which he narrated in an article entitled “Leaving Okotso by Moonlight”, “The full moon of January was just itself above the eastern horizon. My evening meal was almost ready. The meeting house was as lonesome as ever. The crowd at the upper end of the village now numbered about a hundred and was decidedly noisy. At this moment the teacher showed himself in front of my tent and suggested that the evening meeting was omitted. I asked for an explanation. He then told me that he had overheard the plans that were developing at the head of the village. He said that the crowd had decided on a program the first act of which was to take the missionary’s head. The second act was to take his, the teacher’s head. (Ichungo). The third was to take the head of Etsussao, the most influential Christian in the village, and one who, indeed, had done more than any other to start the little church. The last number of this unusually interesting program was to light upon the Christian as a body and cut to pieces all who did not escape to the jungle”. (Okotso Baptist Ekhumkho Motsu 2004:107)

Realizing that they had omitted a crime, the villagers send two chiefs, namely Mphyosao and Lichio with a cock in hand to appease the fleeing missionary. But the missionary was told by his cook Kinukaba that the villagers were sharpening their weapons to cut off his head, hence there was no choice but to leave Okotso. Rev. Longwell on his way to Impur reported to J. Needham, the then SDO of Mokokchung about the incident. By the order of the SDO, the people of Okotso were summoned to Mokokchung and order was given to identify the culprits who plotted to kill the missionary, but the non- Christians confided the matter within themselves. As a result, 500 labor force was imposed on the non- Christians as punishment. They were sent to work in the field of two Dobashis. They were made to work the whole day, neither giving rest nor chance to straighten their back. Only after testing the hard labor, some of them realized and said that, the Kestans (Christians) are always backed by

the whites, whereas there is no one to rescue them when such occasion arises. On this ground, some of them resolved to become Christian than to suffer in the hands of the whites. Subsequently, 30 household became Christians just for the sake of escaping from punishment. They later became staunch believers. (Okotso Baptist Ekhumkho Motsu 2004: 99).

Dr. Witter reported in 1888 that when the first preaching tour was made in the Lotha villages the same year, it attracted many attentive listeners but none of them were willing to leave their demon worship. (Murry, 1979:21). The main reason for the objection was that the converts jeopardize the well- being of the entire community. In a tribal set- up as that of the Lothas, the individual is protected, cared for and loved by the clan and the village. One is never allowed to starve or reduced to begging. The clan looks after the welfare of the family and even avenges the death of a clansman at the hands of enemies. In a society such as this, therefore, there is restricted freedom of action for the individual. As M. Horam puts it, 'he is a link in the chain of his society, and a weak or broken link will affect the whole chain'. (1972: 39).

Festivals among the Lothas require the participation of every individual in the society. The Christian missionaries were uncompromising regarding the new converts participating in any animistic ritual. Violation of the traditional rituals and customs made the villagers fear ill luck, and called for punishment. The village not willing to risk the ire of its Gods was often instrumental in the exodus of the Christian converts of a village and thus to founding of new ones. A case in point: In 1927, newly converted Christians of Akuk village migrated to found a new village which came to be called Lio Longidang. In 1930, Osa yan village, about one kilometers west of Pangti, was founded by converts who fled from pangti village. The village was abandoned after several years due to environmental problems. (Interview with Wosumo, Pangti Village 12:06:2014)

This initial opposition to the new faith which was formidable makes us to wonder as to what were the factors behind it. Horam traced the answer to the mainstay of the tribal people, which was agriculture. (1972:40). The early tribal life centered round the soil, the ancestral fields, sowing and harvesting. Village feasts were dictated by the agricultural calendar and the seasons. Most religious ceremonies and festivals were directly connected with the fields. Deities and spirits were appeased so as not to bring misfortune but to bless the village with good harvest. Genna, sacrifices, ceremonies, rites and rituals were observed to secure good harvests. In other words, the entire social structure was dependent on the economic self sufficiency of the villages. Agricultural success and good harvests depended on the mood of the Deities and spirits most of whom were malignant by nature and whom, the villagers could not afford to offend. The village could never allow any individual to offend the spirits, for the repercussion would be felt by the entire village. Therefore, when misfortune came to the villages, the Christian converts were blamed that by bringing a new faith to the villages they offended the spirits.

#### THE PIONEER LOTHAS CHRISTIANS

In 1885, when the Witters arrived at Wokha there were only two converts. Mhomo Tungoe of Wokha Village and Senlamo Ezung of Longsachung Village. The Lotha church Wokha records Mhomo Tungoe as the first convert among the Lothas, converted through Robi, the Assamese evangelist in 1884. (Kyong Baptist churches Association, 1998:10). Both received education from Impur and were baptized by Dr. Clark, the then missionary at Molung in 1885. Mhomo Tungoe became a pioneer missionary among the Lothas but missionary activity was cut short because of his untimely death at the age of twenty-one in 1906. He was buried with Christian funerary rites performed by two Ao Molung school

mates. (Wokha Town Baptist Church History: 07). Senlamo Ezung, on his return from Molung at the completion of his studies, opened a school at his village Longsachung with thirteen students. But it was not until 1928 that Christianity began to grow in these villages. This first batch of converts could not do much because of the absence of resident missionary at Wokha.

The second batch of converts became the pillars in the building of the Lotha churches. This batch includes Nkhao, Shanruo, Shanjamo and Chijamo. Their work was not confined to the Lotha churches only but extended to other tribes too.

Mr. Nkhao Jungi, son of Nsao Jungi of Yikhum village was born in the 1880s. An orphan since a boy, he was taken to Impur by a visiting missionary from where he received education upto standard four. One of the first two converts among the Lothas in 1896, Mr. Nkhao was baptized on 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 1898 by Rev. F.P. Haggard at Impur. (Downs, 1971:126.). The same year, his brother Shanjamo was send to Impur to study. Along with other few converts, He established a church at Yikhum village in midst of opposition from the non Christian villagers. He was mocked and tortured for preaching the gospel. The church building which he constructed was dismantled three times by the villagers and he received all the humiliation, insult and neglect. The villagers fined them five (5) Rupees and the church was pulled down.(Yikhum Baptist church history record). Thereafter, with his family, Nkhao went to Mekukla village to preach the gospel of salvation, but instead of accepting the new faith he was unceremoniously rejected with insults and ridicule. Therefore he returned home full of sorrow and shame. (Kikon; 2004:04). At his death, the pastoring was entrusted to his brother Shanjamo Jungi.

Mr. Shanjamo Jungi, was the first Naga to visit the USA in 1905. Born on 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan 1882 at Yikhum village, he had his school education at Clark's mission school, Impur, from july 1898 till 1904. He was baptized on 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 1899 at Impur by Rev. Dowd. In 1901, he



worked as a missionary at Okotso village. Due to his zeal in the mission service, he was taken to the USA by Rev. S.A.Perrine in 1905. There he studied for some time at Mt. Hermon School. Besides the US, he visited UK, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Egypt, Palestine and several cities in India like Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Agra, Jaipur and Gauhati, etc. on his return to Wokha from the states, Shanjamo took up pastoral ministry in many places in Wokha and Mokokchung. He taught in Vankhosung School too. He worked as a pastor at Changtongya (Mokokchung district) in 1910, Okotso 1911, Changpang 1912-13, Yikhum 1924, Changsu old 1921-22, and Longtang (Litami) 1927-29. Between 1915 and 1917, he worked at Impur mission centre.

During the First World War in 1917, the British authorities put Shanjamo in charge of the Naga Labor corps to France. A devoted worker and philanthropist, Shanjamo took up the task of spreading the gospel. Industrious and indefatigable, he travelled from place to place with his luggage on his back preaching the Good news of God's love, enduring hunger, thirst, fatigue and often humiliation from the animists. (Kikon: 1993:5). In 1928, Mr. Shanjamo donated Rupees one hundred for purchase of Land for the mission centre Vankhosung. Between 1930 and 1937, he served as teacher at the mission school at Vankhosung. In 1945, he returned to Vankhosung as a caretaker at the mission centre and retired from the job in November 1948. Widely travelled, Shanjamo was well versed in English, Assamese and Ao besides his mother tongue. He translated several Gospel literature and contributed in the preparation of the outline Grammar of the Lotha dialect. Mr. Shanjamo who served with utmost dedication and self sacrifice, enriching the Lothas in knowledge and widening their intellectual and mental horizon, died a poor man in 1956. (Kikon, 1993:05).

Mention may also be made of Shanrio Ngulli of Tsungiki village. He is one of the earliest Lotha converts. He received elementary education from Impur, converted in 1896 and baptized in oct 1898 by Rev. F.P. Haggard at Impur. After few years of study, he served as a

teacher at Wokha village school. He established a church at tsungiki village in 1918 and pastored there till he died in the 1930s.

Another pioneer evangelist among the Lothas was Chijamo ovung. His achievement was in pastoral and evangelical fields. He studied at Impur mission school in 1898. Ovung was baptized in Nov 1899 by Rev. F.P Haggard. After having received Bible training in Assamese at Gauhati he returned to work at Impur. In 1907, he established a school at Tsungiki village, Wokha, where he worked as a pastor and teacher. He also served in the Government Dispensary at Wokha station in 1913. During this period he established a church at Wokha station. Mr. Ovung extended much help in procuring land from Wokha village for opening a mission centre at Vankhosung. Appointed as evangelist by the Lotha Christian Association in 1926, Chijamo travelled to almost all the villages of Wokha, strengthening churches and also helping new churches to be established. It is to be noted that Evangelist Chijamo, the first Christian from his native village, Pyangsa, was expelled from his village by order of the Government, on demand of the villagers, for embracing the new faith. He, however, visited his village on several occasion preaching the Gospel. At his old age, he returned to his village where he died in 1944.

#### THE GROWTH OF CHURCHES:

The first church in Lotha area was established in 1904 at Okotso village, which is on the North- eastern part of Wokha bordering the Aos. The person responsible for the establishment of this church was Etssisao Ngulli of Okotso village. Through the preaching of Shanjamo and Shanrio, Etssisao became the first convert in Okotso in 1901. He then joined the Impur Mission School the same year and was Baptised on June 22, 1902 at Impur by Rev. Dowd.( Okotso Baptist Ekhumkho Motsu, 2004: 97). While in study he often shared the good

news of salvation to his native people, and by the time he came back to his village after finishing his studies, six people namely, Rilamo, Rashumthung, Wonyimo, Zantsemo, Ibonsao and Lojamo readily became Christians. Following their conversions, they started a small fellowship and thus the first church in the Lotha area was established in 1904. M.M. Clark wrote, “A fairly strong church has been established among the Lothas in Okotso”. (1907:156) The six converts were baptized at Impur on January 16, 1904 along with two others, Akhomo and Thunglamo.

The member of the first Church grew steadily. Tssolo was baptized on March 16 and Lanbemo Merry of Okotso was baptized on July 10, 1904. Seven women namely, Emiv, Thungsali, Kholam, Pfuchinyimi, Wozano, Chumjan and Pvuden were baptized at Impur on October 29 1904 after which the women fellowship was started at Okotso. In 1906, another 16 new members were baptized by Rev. Perrine and their membership was maintained at Impur Church, and transferred to Okotso Church on April 8, 1906. (Okotso Church History, 2004: 98). The rapid growth of the church is nothing short of a miracle under the leadership of the young pastor Etssisao. He was the first pastor of Okotso Baptist church where he served diligently between 1905 and 1912 when he took up a Government job. At this stage Okotso was a part of the Ao Association and it remained so till 1922.

In 1923, the Lotha Churches were separated from the Ao Association and the Lotha Association was formed with twelve churches. A meeting of the following eleven Churches was held at Okotso: Mekukla, Lakhuti, Okotso, Champang, Bhandari Yan, Sanis, Yikhum, Changsu, Tsungiki, Wokha, Longtsung and Nungying. (Wokha Town Baptist Church history, 1994:9). The first chairman and secretary of the Lotha Association were Renjamo Kikon of Mekokla and Yichungo Ngully of Okotso respectively. From that year onwards the annual Association of the Kyong Baptist churches Association (KBES) was held every year. The Lotha church claims that the first Lotha Association was held in November, 1926. (Philips,

1976:105). Evangelists Ibonsao and Chichamo were faithful. Baptism rose to one hundred every year. Ibonsao baptized 168 converts in 1929, making the Lotha church membership 758.. The Annual Lotha Association in 1932 was held at N. Longidang village and it reported the number of Lotha Baptised member as one thousand. By 1946, there were forty- six churches in the Lotha area with baptized members of two thousand. By 1950, the number of converts rose to four thousand.

Other pioneer Lotha churches which started the pace of proselytisation in the Lotha area are Yikhum, established in 1906, Changpang in 1912, Mekukla in 1913, Tsingiki in 1918, Wokha Town Baptist church in 1919, Lakhuti in 1920, Sanis in 1921, Longtsung in 1921, Bhandari yan church in 1921, Nungying in 1922. (Lotha Baptist Churches Association KBES Platinum Jubilee, 1998: 18). Besides these Baptist churches, churches of other denominations were also established in the Lotha area, which includes Roman Catholic church established in Lakhuti village in 1951, the first catholic church in Nagaland. Assembly of God church came to the Lotha area in 1961. Besides these, NCRC, United Pentecostal church and Seven days Adventist also came to the Lotha area. (Yikhum Baptist Church Centennial celebration, 1998 :5).

## THE MISSION SCHOOL

To Rev. W. E Witter and his wife goes the credit for many ‘firsts’ in the Lotha land. The American Baptist missionaries saw schools as the most effective means of reaching the people. The emphasis on education was largely instrumental which led to the success of the missionaries in breaking through to the Lothas. The first missionary school was started in the form of Sunday school early in 1885 by the Witters. On Sunday morning of August 2,1885, Mrs Witter gathered several Naga boys about her and began the first formal teaching of

Christianity to the Lotha Nagas. It was a day of small thing but from which bore the rich fruits. (Sangma. Vol-11, 1992:218). They opened another Sunday school for the mixed races found at Wokha. Children were taught the Catechism and Lord's Prayer. Simultaneously translation work started. But the school work was not very encouraging. On August 15, 1885, a day school was started but it closed soon because of poor attendance. The parents were not prepared to send their children to the missionary school. The initial reservation on the part of the parents to send their children to school was primarily related to economics. The parents contended that the children cannot eat unless they work in the fields. The parents were still not willing to lose a hand in the field or to look after the infants at home. Therefore the parents asked that their children be paid for attending school. This practice was commonplace in the early years as Rev. Witter reported in July 1887, "To get this savages to school, we must at least give them their rice; for the parents have as yet no desire that they be taught to read and write, and would as soon throw their rice in the fire as to send it to the station for the support of a boy in the school". (Murry (ed), 1979: 10). Besides, as the Lothas refuse to let the girls go away from their villages as they expect to receive a large sum for them in marriage, the few children that attended the school were boys only.

By 1910, six schools were set up but soon abandoned. Mr. Longwell reported in 1910, "In recent years, six schools have been organized and abandoned in the Lotha tribe. I do not know any reason than that no missionary ever looked in upon them". (Murry (ed), 1979:41). However the clouds over the Lotha region began to scatter and shine when the Lotha students at Impur began to become Christians. Perrine reported; "The Lotha is perhaps the most encouraging part of the work. Boys have been drawn from every part of that tribe for the training school. Good numbers have become Christians. A few girls have been induced to attend Impur School. They are the very first among Lothas." (The Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 1992:57).

A school was opened for the Lothas at Furkating in 1920, which was later shifted to Vankhosung in 1928. Dr. Bailey, the then missionary in charge of the Lothas, secured permission to build the Lotha Christian centre at Vankhosung in 1926- 27, and the Furkating school was shifted there. This school was shifted to Wokha town in 1944 which was taken over by the Government. In 1964, an English Medium school was opened by the KBES which was later rechristened as Shanjamo memorial school on Nov 22, 1968. The first teachers were David Mangratee and Renchilo Kinghen. At the completion of the construction of the school building, the annual conference of the KBES was held there in 1968. (SMBES record, 1989:01).

## THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

The growing need of evangelism led to the opening of a vernacular Bible school in 1946 called 'Lotha Bible School' in Vankhosung, promising young men to receive training. The school was founded, sponsored and functions under the shelter of the Kyong Baptist Ekhumkho sanrhyutsu KBES (The Lotha Baptist churches Association). Rev. Tanquist was the first principal and Rev. Zanao Yanthan, who was the co founder of the college served as its first head master. The first batch of students enrolled in the school between 1946- 47 includes Rev. Anyimo Patton, Rev. Tsenao Ezung, Mr. Chumbemo shitiri, Vanthungo Ngullie, Wobemo odyuo, Myamo odyuo, Wopansao Ngullie and Loshumlo Tungoe. Till 1990, the school offered two years vernacular course with Lotha dialect as the medium of instruction. It offered certificate of theology and later, Graduate in Theology by 1991. The school was later re- christened as Witter Bible Institute with English as the medium of instruction. The institute was named after Dr. W. E. Witter, the first missionary officially assigned to the Lotha area. In 1998, it has been accredited to Asia Theological Association

(ATA). In 1999, the institute was again upgraded to a full- fledged degree course offering a four year bachelor of theology course and was renamed as the Witter Bible College. In December, 2010, the college was again renamed as the Witter Theological College with its motto “Training today, Leaders tomorrow”. (NBCC platinum Jubilee,2012: 93 ).

In the year 2006, the College was accorded a three – year provisional recognition by the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC). The KBES and the faculty have moved for affiliation of the college to the Senate of Serampore, and a permanent recognition to NBCC. The college is also recognized by the Government of Nagaland.

#### THE KYONG BAPTIST EKHUMKHO SANRHYUTSU KBES (THE LOTHAS BAPTIST CHURCHES ASSOCIATION

In 1888, Dr and Mrs Witter left Wokha and the Lotha field was left under the supervision of missionaries at Impur. From the establishment of the first church at Okotso in 1904 till 1923, the Lotha churches remained under the Ao Association. By 1923, the strength of the Lotha church had grown to twelve and with that strength they felt the need of a separate Association. These churches are: Okotso, Yikhum, Jangpang, Mekokla, Wokha Town, Tsungiki, Longtsung, Lakhuti, Changsu Yanhen, Sanis, Bhandari Yan and Nungying.

The growing strength of the Lotha churches, the long and tiring travelling and the Language barriers in attending the Ao Christian Association annual meetings were the factors which compelled the Lotha Christians to form their own Association .On June 21, 1923, a meeting was held at Okotso village and the Association was formed with twelve ( 12 ) established Churches and Rajamo kikon of Mekukla and Yichungo Ngully of Okotso were the first Chairman and Secretary respectively. (Yikhum Baptist Church records, 1998:6)

In 1928, the dream of the missionaries to own a Christian centre in Lotha area was realized by Dr. J. R. Bailey. Through his active initiation, the present KBES Mission Centre, Vankhosung was purchased. Shanjamo Jungi donated an amount of Rupees one hundred towards the purchase of the land. But with the untimely demise of Dr. Bailey, the Lothas were left without a resident missionary. It was only in 1948 that the mission centre was occupied by the Rev and Mrs Houston. After the Houstons left in 1953, the mission was left in the hands of the Lotha local evangelists. Between 1953- 1958, Rev. Ahamo Patton served as the field secretary of the KBES, Rev. Nzanbemo Murry was the field Director in the years 1959- 1973. Between 1974- 1980, Rev. Yankey patton served as the Executive Secretary , Rev. Chimomo Yanthan as Executive Secretary between 1981- 1989. Rev Nzanbemo Murry again served the KBES in the capacity of Executive Secretary between 1990- 1993. Rev. John Ovung took charge as Executive secretary between 1994 and 2001. He was succeeded by Rev. N. T. Murry who served between 2002 and 2005. Rev. Dr. Nrio Ezung served from 2006 till 2013. At present the executive secretary of the KBES is Rev. M.C. Kithan.

From a humble beginning, the KBES has grown to ten Departments and thirty – six employees by 2012. Today, the KBES has 121 affiliated churches, 10 fellowships, 18 Licentiate pastors and 64 ordained Ministers. (NBCC platinum Jubilee, 2012: 93). The Association has a total Baptized membership of about 59,856 as per the census of 2010. The Christian population of Wokha District accounts to about 95 %, out of which 85% are Baptist.

Realizing the objective of Mission and Evangelism, the KBES has been involved with various evangelism with full – fledged Secretary for Mission and Evangelism. One such mission is the 10/ 40 window of the Great Himalayan region, Myanmar, Bangladesh, etc. In 1978, the KBES launched an outreach Mission, collaborating with the Nihang Karbi – Anglong Baptist Association (NKBA). The KBES has also worked with the South Bank Boro Baptist Association (SBBBCA), Assam Nepali Baptist Churches Association (ANBCA) and



the Nagaland – Assam Border Mission. The KBES still supports the Nagaland – Assam Border Mission. Four schools were started at Manja, Hawaipur, Langhen and N. C. Hills and several individuals were imparted leadership training sponsored by the KBES.

The KBES also spread its evangelism to Arunachal Pradesh. A full time missionary is sponsored at Selaikhati town, 18 kilometres away from Arunachal border. A missionary cottage is constructed in memory of Chuchumo Ezung by his children. It is christened by Dr. Nrio Ezung as Yimkha village Baptist church Golden Jubilee building. Besides these, the KBES sponsored local churches, fellowship groups, women leaders, individuals and families under the Home Mission Fund of the KBES. (NBCC Platinum Jubilee, 2012: 94).

## THE BEGINNING OF OTHER CHRISTIAN GROUPS

Up until 1950, the Christianity practiced in the Lotha region was that of the Baptist Church. A major challenge faced by the established Baptist Church was posed by the entry of the Catholic Mission in 1950 and the spread of the charismatic Revival Movement which first appeared in 1960.

## CATHOLIC MISSION

Among the Naga tribes, it was the Lothas and the Angamis who first came into contact and responded positively to the Catholic mission. The first catholic missionary to enter Nagaland was Fr. Marcellinus Molz, a German Salvatorian (SDB) from Bondashil (present Bangladesh). He reached Tamlu (Phom Naga area) in 1908. (Karotemprel, 1993: pp225-26). Another Catholic missionary to come to the Naga Hills was also a Salvatorian, Fr. Ansgar Koenigsbauer. He visited the Naga Hills in 1912 on his way to Imphal from Bondashil.

However, systematic efforts to plant a catholic church in the Naga Hills started only after the Nagas had successfully resisted the Japanese expansion and control over the hills. At that time, the British Government built a hospital at Kohima but soon left without filling the required staff. This need was communicated by Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam, to Bishop Stephen Ferrando, following a visit the Governor had made to Kohima in connection with the future of the Naga Hills in independent India. (Syiemlieh, 1990: 41). Promptly, two sisters, Margarita and Guadalupe accompanied by their Chaplain Monsignor Bars were sent to offer their services to the Naga Hospital. They arrived in Kohima at the end of December 1948.

Monsignor Bars was succeeded by Fr. Marocchino SDB in 1952. During the years that Marocchino was in the Naga Hills he was able to establish a small but very vibrant catholic community. In 1963 when Fr. Marocchino left Kohima, there was a small but fervent group of Angami Naga Catholics in Kohima area. Among his first converts was Mr. John Jasokie, the ex- minister of Nagaland. (Karotemprel, 1993:226).

Simultaneously, with the Angami mission, work was also in progress to take the catholic faith to the Lotha tribe. The Lothas made frequent visits to the markets in the plains of Assam for barter trade with the plainsmen. It was here in the railroads of Furkating and Golaghat that the Lothas came into contact with the catholic fathers. The first contact with the Lothas by the catholic Fathers at Golaghat goes back to 1946 when Fr. Nyans employed a large group of men to clear the jungle for the mission station. As early as then, Fr. Nyans hoped that his mission would also take the catholic faith to the tribes of the Naga Hills. (Syiemlieh, 1990:49). Some Lotha working group also went for clearing work of the mission compound. At that time Fr. Nyans said to the Lothas, "I am telling you, one day your people (tribe) and your children will come here for education". (Lungsa Katholik Ekhumkho silver Jubilee 1963- 88: 9).

In 1950, seven members (families) of the Lakhuti Church were involved in church disciplinary action which required their apology for their misconduct. Four members apologized and reconciled to the church, but the rest three did not want to go back to the Baptist church. Therefore, on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1951, they visited the Catholic Church at Golaghat and expressed their willingness to embrace Catholicism. Before they proceeded to Golaghat, the three dissidents made a bold statement that, “despite opposition, and even if none joined them, they were determined to become catholic”. (Longsa Katholik Ekhumkho jubilee, 1998: 10). The three were Yantsao Yanthan, Shampano Humtsoe and Chenisao Humtsoe.

On April 7, 1951 these men walked to Wokha and met M. Kithan, a prominent Lotha and M. Kinghen, the Chairman of the Lotha Bench court and enquired whether it was wrong to take to Catholicism. These simple villagers were assured that there was nothing wrong in what they had done and that freedom of religion is guaranteed by the Indian constitution. (Syiemlieh, 1990: 50). They also went to Vankhosung Mission centre and met Rev. Houston to clarify if it was a sin to join the Catholic Church. Rev Houston replied, “You must decide this by yourself. I cannot say that you are committing a sin by embracing Catholicism because the Catholic Church is the beginning of all Churches.” (Lungsa Katholik silver jubilee 1988: 10). On April 10, they made another visit to Golaghat and on April 12 the three Lothas met Fr. F. Bollini who instructed them in the faith and later baptized them establishing themselves as the first catholics in Nagaland.. They organized the first Catholic Church in Lotha area at Lakhuti in May 1951. (Murry, 1976:29).

Initially, there was some opposition from the Baptist brethren in their village. Braving the challenges in the face of opposition from the Baptists, they built the first church at Lakhuti and the first religious service was conducted on 1<sup>st</sup> may 1951. The Lotha Baptist church council, concerned about the formation of the Catholic Church called a meeting, which was attended by thirty- six delegates from 15 villages. The report of the Secretary Khodao

Yanthan shows the Agenda of the meeting as “Remedy for the Roman members of Lakhuti village”. (Lungsa Catholic Silver Jubilee, 1988:11). Bishop Orestes Marengo, the then Bishop of Dibrugarh visited his Lotha flock in 1955 together with Fr. J. Larrea SDB and exhorted them to be strong. (Karotemprel 1993:226). Fr. Larrea learned the Lotha language almost to perfection. The song that he composed for the village is now used as the village anthem by all irrespective of the faith they belong to.

The response to the start of the Catholic Church among the Lothas of Lakhuti was encouraging, as even though without a Catechist among them yet, their membership increased. Louis Yanthan was later appointed as the first Catechist. (Syiemleih, 1990:52).

In the beginning of 1955, Fr. Larrea made preparation to open a Catechist school for Lotha boys at Dibrugarh. Along with the boys, Lotha girls were sent to study in the Don Bosco School at Dibrugarh with the hope that they would become leaders in their villages. This school was later shifted to Wokha in 1965. At that time the school had 96 students. The Catholic mission contributed much in the field of education in the Lotha area.

#### NAGALAND CHRISTIAN REVIVAL CHURCH (NCRC)

Besides the Catholic Church, there are other churches of different denominations in the Lotha area. Around the year 1960, a preacher, Benjamin by name formed a group of Christians who emphasize second Baptism of the Holy Spirit. He was a freelance preacher from Shillong and Jorhat who did not have membership in any Church. (Mozhui, 2004:55). There was a call for a second baptism, a step towards getting gifts of the spirit manifested in speaking tongues, seeing visions, and prophesying. These were either preceded by or followed by fasting and praying. It affected the Baptist Churches and a split became inevitable, for the extremity that the revivalists displayed in their worship

contradicted the basic Baptist tenets. They formed a separate body from the Baptist Church called Nagaland Christian Revival Church. The NCRC was divided into three separate groups, each under a leader. One of the three, Tsenthungo Lotha organized the first Assembly of God (AG) church in Lotha area, in N. Longidang village. The seventh day Adventist and Spirit of Faith are other churches established recently in the Lotha area.

Despite overwhelming odds the early missionaries rendered yeomen's services to the Lothas in reclaiming them from the primitive lives. The introduction of the new religion brought tremendous changes in the character and habits of the Lothas. They learnt the value of peace, tolerance and peaceful co- existence with their fellow- men and neighbors. They recognized the value of education, sanitation and better living conditions. Christian values of universal brotherhood and the growth of education had widened their outlook, and better economic opportunities. The advent of Christianity gave a powerful push to the wheel of social change and the Lothas had taken a long stride ahead.

## CHAPTER 4

### MODERN EDUCATION AND ITS IMPACT

Prior to the establishment of the British rule and the subsequent entry of the American Baptist missionaries into the Lotha area during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Lothas lived in isolation in their village- state. They had their own distinct social life, manners of living, laws and customs and method of governance. The village was the main political and social structure that made them strong and united to fight against the outside forces. The advent of the British and the Christian missionaries, and the consequent introduction of modern education brought about drastic and significant change in the social, cultural, political, economic and religious life of the Lothas. It marked the end of a long period of isolation and the beginning of a new age. These factors also set the process of modernization of the tribe. A new History has to be written. The present chapter attempt to study the traditional system of education, the introduction and development of modern education and its impacts on the life of the Lothas. While doing so, the status of the Lotha women in the traditional society and the impact of modern education are reasonably dealt with.

#### TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

The indigenous education of the Lothas can be categorized into two types- Firstly, the family education imparted in the kitchen hearth. Secondly, the Social education given in the *Chumpo*, the bachelor's dormitory. Traditionally the Lothas lived in self contained villages and there was no organization to deal with the needs of the tribe as a whole. Each village was a state in itself. There is no written record for their past prior to British administration but

their oral tradition and practice shows that they are an organized society. Each village was solely responsible for its own social, religious, political and economic needs. Such need required that the young be taught and trained within the family and the village community. Therefore, the Kitchen hearth and the *Chumpo* served as the indigenous training centres.

In the family education, the parents play important role in educating the children. The Lotha family system is patriarchal and the father being the head of the family, is obeyed by all the members of the family. Whenever disciplining and correcting is required, the children are called to the kitchen hearth and corrected there. In the olden days, the Lothas did not have a common room to entertain others, or for the family to gather as they do today. The kitchen was the place where children receive their basic education from their parents such as discipline and rules and regulations. Jonatsungba Amer noted that in the Naga hearth , “the father teaches his children how to live in the society, enough opportunity is given to the children each day to observe an experienced head of the family, children are taught to play, share, co-operate and behave themselves before they are called to shoulder important responsibilities. From sunrise to sundown they are surrounded by educational activities”.(1992:11). In the hearth, the son is thoroughly educated to perpetuate the religion, culture and traditions of his family before he leaves his parents to start a new family of his own.

The mother plays an important role in the family by teaching the children to be responsible persons in the family and the society. She is especially careful in teaching her girls the domestic tasks, social behaviour, good manners and obedience. The girl child is taught the virtue of patience early. By the time she attains puberty, she learns to wake up early to cook for the family and perform the household chores. There was no separate dormitory for the girls among the Lothas, but on adolescent the girls live with the older unmarried women or widows of the clan who plays the role of matrons and teachers. The girls learn the art of

weaving, spinning cotton, child care, respect for elders etc in this place. Thus, the youngest boys and girls were taught every morning and evening by the parents and elders in the family in the kitchen hearth where they gather for meals and relaxing. Folk tales and songs were recited with explanation by the parents and elders to children while preparing food.

Originally, the *Chumpo* was the fortress of the village where the young men sleep and guard the village. It was a training centre for warfare, and during the head hunting days, the *Chumpo* was the centre of all the village activities. There used to be one *Chumpo* for each *yankho* (khel) of the village. The Lotha *Chumpo* is equivalent to the 'Morung' a general term which came to be used to describe the Naga bachelors' dormitory. Morung is not a Naga word. One of the earliest definitions of the word Morung is found in the Ao- Naga Dictionary compiled in 1911 by Dr. Edward Winter Clark, the first American missionary to the Naga Hills. According to the definition given by Clark, the word Morung is derived from the Assamese word which means "A big log drum". (Pongener, 2011:15). In the olden days it was the custom of the Nagas to keep log drums in the dormitory, therefore, the Assamese perhaps called the dormitory itself as Morung.

The Lotha *Chumpo* (Morung) was an important educational institution for the boys. It was here that the Lothas prepared their young men for life. It has multifarious functions and purposes. There were regular ranks which boys passed until they attained adulthood and were admitted to full membership. Usually, after the age of fourteen to fifteen, a Lotha boy would cease to sleep in his parental house but in the *Chumpo* with his mates. The induction into the *Chumpo* marks the transition from adolescent into adulthood. The boys were organized into age grade, and each was assigned specific works such as collecting firewood, cleaning, fetching water, guarding the village, passing information etc. The older grades have stronger control over the younger ones in matters of discipline and work. It is in the *Chumpo* (Morung) the boys are taught to live for a greater cause of the community and village, rather than their



own individual needs. Ketoukhrie-u articulate that “It is in the Morung that the sense of ‘we’ feeling amongst the people is developed that binds them together as one”. (2012:161). In other words, communitarian spirit was developed in this traditional institution.

All the disciplining too is done here. Much of the Naga culture, its customs and traditions had been transmitted from generation to generation through the media of folk music and dance, folktales and oral historical traditions, carvings of figures on stone and wood, and designs on clothes. (Shishak, 1990:27). Among the Lothas, these were taught and learned in the *Chumpo*. The inmates were given vocational training on basket making, wood carving etc. The *Chumporamo* (Head of the Chumpo) was the principal of the institution. The boys, led by the *Chumporamo*, acted like special task force of the village. (Murry, 1976:8). J.P.Mills noted that “A morung is a microcosm of the village and has its own council, reminding one strongly again of a public school with its prefects”. (1973:180).

It was also a recreational club where the boys learn various traditional sports and games. Besides, in the evening, after the day’s work done, the boys would gather around the hearth and sing folk songs. The Lotha folk songs tend to be romantic in their content as their composition was often inspired by boy- girl relationships. However, there were also many folk songs which contain historical background of the tribe, the community, the village, the clan, and certain well known individuals of the communities. They also speak about evil deeds and mistakes committed by the people of the communities, from which to learn not to commit the same deeds. About the role of this traditional institute Charles Chasie says, “From the morung would emerge the pride of the clan, fully prepared for life and to play their roles in society. Each would know his place within the family, the clan, the khel and the village, and how he ought to behave, and act within them. He would give due regard to everyone, choose not to be the first to give offence lest it ends in bringing shame and loss of face to his family and clan.” (1999:109). Thus the *Chumpo* served as an institute of socialization,

learning, training and discipline. J.P. Mills wrote that “The interior of a *Chumpo* is not attractive. It is dark, dirty, stuffy and full of flies. Yet a Lotha talks of his happy *Chumpo* days much as an Englishman talks of his school days”. (1922:25).

In the absence of any written documents or language, this traditional mode of education of the Lothas played an important role in imparting and preserving oral historical traditions and folklore, which remain the sole link between the present and the past. Therefore, it is rather naïve to conclude that the Lothas received no education before contact with the west. Even though without formal education, the Lotha received education at all stages of their life which was in the interest of the cohesion of the community as a whole. To agree with John Wilson who, writing on the west African culture said, “Education is itself part of the social organization of any society whether or not that society has anything which might be recognized as a school”. (1963: 17).

## DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN EDUCATION

### MISSION SCHOOL

The American Baptist missionaries were the first to introduce modern education to the Lothas. In the period of initial expansion into the area, the missionaries did important pioneering works in several directions. To proceed with their activities of evangelization, it was necessary to spread education so that the Bible could be read and understood. As a result the missionaries were not only preachers but also educators, translator and publishers. Significant contributions were made in these areas among the Lothas by the missionaries.

On August 2, 1885, the beginning was made towards the introduction of modern education to the Lothas, when Mrs. Witter gathered several Lotha boys and began the first formal teaching of Christianity. From 5<sup>th</sup> February 1886 onward, the instruction of the Sunday school was

given in Lotha dialect by Dr Witter, while Mrs Witter opened a Sunday school class for sepoy and bazaar children, who were of mixed races but all understood Assamese. (Sangma, 1992:218). Thus a humble but fruitful beginning of education was made among the Lothas through the Sunday schools.

On August 25, 1886, a day school was opened with three Lotha boys, the number of which subsequently increased to seven, all of whom were employed in the home of the missionaries. Dr Witter and his wife bought a small plot of land at Wokha village and constructed a small house for the school. That was the first school in the Lotha area. (Ngullie, 1994:110) The daily sessions were from an hour to an hour and a half, a part of which time was spent in Bible instruction and a part in teaching the boys to read and write their own language, the Roman character having been adopted. A first primer was prepared by Dr. Witter, which the boys learned rapidly. They learnt to read and write their own language, at the same time the boys were given Bible instructions and taught hymns.

Some Lotha boys also were enrolled in the Impur mission school by then. In 1902, about 20 Lotha boys were in the Impur school, several of them were Christians and two of them were then teaching and preaching among their people.(Sangma,1992:219). The School work was not very encouraging in the beginning because the parents were reluctant to send their children to the schools because of their religious scruples. After the departure of the Witters in 1888, there was no resident missionary for the Lothas for ten years. During that period even the school works came to a standstill. Six schools which had been established were abandoned. The Lotha boys and girls continued to study in Impur, Kohima and Jorhat.

In 1926, a mission school was started in Furkating with a particular view to work for the Lothas. W. R Hutton was in charge of the school at Furkating in 1926 in which, 25 Lothas and 2 Semas were enrolled. (Sangma, 1992:219). Until 1927, the mission work for the Lothas was still divided, the educational work being done at Furkating, the field work from Impur.

The arrangement was not a satisfactory one, and some of the Lotha boys left. Thereafter, a Lotha mission school was founded at Vankhosung mission centre, Wokha in 1932.

Till 1937, there was not a single Middle English school among the Lothas. They requested the Association to raise the standard of their school at Vankhosung, and accordingly standard 5 was added in 1937 and the next year standard 6 was added. This required the appointment of additional teachers, and in 1938 the Lotha committee representing 74 villages decided to support the additional teachers. By 1940, nearly 100 students were enrolled in the Vankhosung School. The first Lothas who dedicated their lives as teachers in this school were Chumdemo Murry and Tssayio Kikon. (Lotha Churches Association Record). The school worked well until a Government Middle English school was established at Wokha town in 1944 and the teachers were absorbed into the Government School. The buildings at Vankhosung continued to be used as Lotha Christian Centre for Bible conferences and Church Council meetings.

The popularity of the mission schools made them the main educational institutions for the Lotha children. It was in the mission schools many Lothas were educated and trained who later became pastors, evangelists and teachers in their own villages. The Lothas can also take pride at the long list of social and political leaders who once filled the rolls of the schools run by the missionaries.

#### GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS:

The British rulers simultaneously took initiative to educate the Lothas by opening some single teacher schools in the area. From the beginning of their contact with the Nagas, the British officers perceived the necessity of introducing Christianity and education among the Naga tribes, for they considered education as the best agency for reclaiming the rugged

Nagas to order and civilization. (Sema, 1992:78). Although the Government largely depended on mission schools for the education of the tribe, it also opened schools on its own. The first Lower primary school was started at Okotso village in 1915 and Mr. Yamolo Lotha of Lio Longidang village was appointed there. Until 1925, there were only four L.P schools for the whole region. The Lotha teachers appointed to look after these schools may be mentioned as Mr. Tsanso Lotha of Okotso village, Motsuo Lotha of Yikhum, Lisso Lotha of Phiro, and Sekhomo Lotha of Akok Village. (Silver Jubilee Souvenir, Govt. High School Wokha, 1969: 12). They were the pioneer Lothas who dedicated their lives for the cause of Education among their people.

It was in 1941, during the time of Mr. P. F. Addams, I.C.S, the sub- divisional officer, Mokokchung, that a Lower Primary (LP) school was opened at Wokha Town. The school was later upgraded to upper primary school. The Lotha people approached the Government with a request to raise the classes to Middle English (ME) standard. The request was granted and a sum of Rs. 8,428/- was sanctioned for the construction of the school building. People living in nearby villages supplied building materials free of cost. Thus, the Wokha L. P School became a M. E school in 1944. The teaching staffs of the Vankhosung mission school were absorbed into the M. E school. The Lotha people took a lot of effort and enthusiasm towards Education of the tribe. N. L. Kinghen mentioned that “ In 1945, C.R. Pawsey, the Deputy commissioner of the Naga Hills, Kohima arranged some petrol drum sheets and Black C. I sheets for the buildings. These were carried by the villagers on their backs from Kohima to Wokha. The villagers volunteered free labor for the re- roofing of the M. E school and the hostel buildings.” (Silver Jubilee Souvenir 1969: 12).

After the Second World War, the Lotha people became very conscious of education of the area and efforts were made by the elders and the tribal council to turn the existing M.E

school at Wokha into a high school. It became increasingly clear that a High school was a necessity as the demand for higher education increased among the people. Initially, the demand for higher education was met by the missionaries by sending the students out of the Naga Hills to other parts of the North East. Some were sent to Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Shillong etc. Undoubtedly, interest in the higher education increased when the Lotha students return with degrees and training, and were able to enter Government service and also adopted different lifestyle. N. L. Kinghen, the then chairman, Lotha tribal court worked with the cooperation of the government and the Dobashis, and their aspiration to open a high school was fulfilled in 1948. The fulfillment of this aspiration has a story of its own. During the Japanese war of 1939- 45, there was shortage of salt in the Naga Hills. The then sub-divisional officer of Mokokchung P. F. Adams recruited people from all tribes to carry up salt on their backs from Nakachari to Mokokchung for sale at the Government controlled rate. The idea was that the sale proceed of the salt would later on be equally divided among the Aos, the Semas and the Lothas for opening schools in their areas. But the sale proceeds did not reach the Lothas which prompted these people to take matters in their own hands and to raise money themselves to manage a high school in the region.

In the later part of 1947, Mr N. L. Kinghen, chairman, Lotha tribal Bench Court and all the senior D.Bs went to Mokokchung to receive the share of the Lothas. After long discussion, the party was informed by the S. D. O of Mokokchung and the members of the Salt Fund Committee that the entire amount which was about 80,000 had been utilized for the benefit of the entire people of the sub- division. The party had to come back to Wokha with great disappointment. The next day, the party left Mokokchung for Wokha. On their way back, the party started reasoning and challenging each other that the Lothas must start a High School at Wokha. The D.Bs promised to pay Rs. 50 each and asked their chairman to contribute a month salary. The chairman agreed to pay Rs. 125. On reaching Wokha, a

meeting of the D.Bs was held where all agreed to pay Rs. 50 each and to further find ways and means to raise more fund for the proposed high school. The challenge was taken up in good spirit by the Lothas and promised to support the project for upliftment of the community.” (Silver Jubilee Souvinir, Govt High School Wokha, 1969:13)

At the beginning of 1948, the Lotha tribal Bench court imposed a cattle tax on cattle traders at the rate of Rs 1 per cattle and Rs. 2 per buffalo. These rates were later raised to Rs.2 per cattle and Rs.4 per buffalo from 1949. This tax was used for the expenses of the school. The villagers also donated some amount towards the school fund. The first teacher brought for the Wokha high school was Shri. Lanu Toy of Changki. He was brought from Changki to Wokha by Shri. Thaiyio, carpentry instructor and the school was upgraded to High School in 1948. The school was maintained with the cattle tax from 1948 to 1958 under the managing committee of which N. L. Kinghen was the Chairman. Mrs. Kinghen was the treasurer of the high school fund during 1948-58.

Educational institutions and all other development works in the Naga Hills were effected during the political disturbances of 1956- 1957. But due to the dedication of the pioneers, teachers and stock holders, the Wokha High School did not close down even for a single day. The school showed satisfactory progress due to the co-operation and assistance of the people of the locality. The Government officials, especially all the Dobashis gave their whole hearted co-operation and assistance for the establishment of the first High school for the Lotha tribe. Mr. Khochamo, Head DB, Mr. Penathung, Mr. Chothungo, Mr. Fuchumo, Mr. Phyolumo, Mr. Ekyemo, Mr. Ezamo, Mr. Yanpanthung, Mr. Rhyuzamo, and Mr. Tachowo were the Dobashis who were the actual executing agents of the School. The school was taken over by the Government in 1958.

Nine (9) M. E Schools were also opened during this period in Aetipyong, Sungro, Lotsu, Yanmhon, Bhandari, Englan, Wozhuro, Chukitong and Sanis villages in the Lotha area. These Schools were also taken over by the Government in 1958.

The Lotha people became more conscious and receptive towards education in the following years. To a great extent the sincerity of the Lotha people helped the progress of Education. The people readily constructed school buildings, hostels and staff quarters free of cost with available local materials along with all possible help.

#### PRIVATIVE INITIATIVES:

Some of the private sector initiatives of significance in the education sector in Wokha district are those of S.M. Baptist School and Don Bosco Higher Secondary School.

- a. S.M Baptist school. This school was established by the Lotha Baptist Churches Association in the year 1964 in memory of Shanjamo Jungio, one of the first converts among the Lothas and the first Naga to be educated in America. The school has been the early moulding ground for many in Wokha district.
- b. Don Bosco Higher Secondary School. It was started in the year 1965 by the Catholic mission. It was upgraded to High school in 1980 and subsequently to Higher Secondary section in 2000. The school has produced many technocrats, bureaucrats and leaders.

Besides these two, there are also many individual and Church- run schools in the district playing commendable roles in promoting education. However, almost 70 percent of these institutions are concentrated in the district and sub- divisional head quarters, while Government Schools are found in all ranges and villages of the district.



## HIGHER EDUCATION

At present the Wokha district has two Arts colleges, one Theological College and a campus of the Global Open University.

1. Mount Tiyi College was established in 1974 and it was taken by the State government in 1987. The College is co- educational and offers degree level courses in Arts.
2. Bailey Baptist College, established in the Year 1996 is an Arts college. It is started by the Wokha Town Lotha Baptist church as one of its outreach missions. The College also has Higher Secondary section.
3. Witter Theological College was first started as a vernacular Bible School for the Lothas in 1946. In course of time it has been re- christened as Witter Theological College, after the name of the first American Missionary to the Lotha people. The College offers five years degree courses of B. Th and B.D.
4. The Global Open University has a Campus in Wokha which offers courses in B.A, MBA and I.T. Since its inception, the Campus has produced 40 professionals in various fields and presently nurturing 20 students in different fields through distance mode.
5. Hindi Education. The district has two Hindi Institute under private management which offers courses from basic up to B.A equivalent.

Figure 4.1 No of Educational Institutions in Wokha district as of 2013

Sl. No	Level of School	State Govt.	Private	Others	Total
1	PP + Primary School	156	55	-	211
2	Middle School	68	42	-	110
3	High School	22	23	2	47
4	Higher Secondary	2	2	-	4
5	College	1	1	-	2
6	Theological college	-	1	-	1
Total		249	124	2	375

Source: District Human Development Report. Wokha: 2013

## LITERATURE:

The earliest Literature came out in a book form in 1887- 88. This book, “An outline grammar of the Lotha Language with a vocabulary and illustrative sentences” was written by W.E Witter, the first Missionary to the Lotha area. He was the first to introduce English script in writing Lotha Language.

The early works on literature were mainly concentrated in translating scripture from the Bible and Hymns. By 1943, the translation of the whole New Testament was completed. Short stories from the Bible, book for Sunday school, Church History, Jesus Christ, Everyday life etc, came out one after the other. A lot of Primers were also written in Lotha Language for the primary students. The earliest ones are: *Sokaden Kaku*, *Penkaden Kaku*, *Khaden Kaku*, Translation of Aesop’s fables etc.

In 1937, some educated Lothas, with the help of the missionaries formed the “Lotha Literature Committee”. This committee was reorganized and recognized by the Government of Nagaland in 1965 and has been actively working towards the development of Lotha Literature even to this day. Under the initiative of the Government of Nagaland, a Language officer has been appointed for the Lotha Language who takes the responsibility in development of text books of Mother Tongue (Lotha) subjects for the students up to secondary level.

The Lotha Baptist Churches Association also formed its own literature committee in 1958 for development of Christian Literature.

The *Kyong* (Lotha) Academy was registered in 1993. Together with the language officer from Education Department, this Academy takes the responsibility of developing curriculum,

syllabus and review of text books for the students who take up vernacular Lotha Language in schools.

Today, besides Christian literature, there are also other literatures in Lotha Language. School books, Dictionaries, idioms and phrases, folk tales, folk songs, customary usages and practices, prose, poems and novels can be found in the Lotha Dialect. (District Human Development Report: Wokha, 2013).

## LITERACY

The rapid growth of educational institutions and the introduction of Adult Literacy Programme have ensured a steady rise in literacy in the district. Under Total Literacy Programme (TLL), more than 10600 illiterate persons enrolled in the Adult Literacy Centres, out of which about 10140 learners have completed all the three primers. (District Human Development Report: Wokha, 2013).

The Literacy rate in the District as per 2011 census is considerably higher than the state literacy rate of 80.11 percent, and places Wokha at the second position among the Districts in Nagaland, next only to Mokokchung District at 92.68 percent. In addition it is observed that the literacy rate for both male and female is quite encouraging.

Figure 4.2. Proportion of Population & Literacy rate of Wokha district.

State/ District	Total Population As per 2011 census.	Male	Female	Total Literacy Rate as of 2013	Male	Female	Sex Ratio (Female per 1000 male)
Nagaland	1,978,502	1,024,649	953,853	79.55	82.75	76.11	931
Wokha	166,343	84,505	81,838	87.69	90.81	84.48	968

Source: Statistical Handbook of Nagaland: 2013

## ENROLMENT

The enrolment at primary level which is from class 1-5 is 20441 in 2012, while in upper primary stage it is 8117, and in secondary level is 2967, indicating an average class size of 19 children in primary, 25 in upper primary and 32 in secondary level per school across the District. Also during the year 2012, the overall enrolment was from primary to Secondary indicating a students' population share of almost 20 percent of the total population of the District. The data also shows the enrolment of girls in the schools is at par with the boys. The spread of modern education among the Lothas helped to a great extent in doing away with the misconception that educating the girl child was a waste. Enrolment of girls is higher than that of the boys in all the three sections. It is also worth noting that the Female literacy rate of Wokha district at 70.01 percent as against 82.75 percent of male is higher than the State's overall literacy rate. Enrolment Data is seen in the figure given below.

Figure 4.3 Wokha district School enrolment 2012

	Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary	Grand Total
Boys	9829	3981	1489	15299
Girls	10612	4136	1478	16226
Total	20441	8117	2967	31525

Source: District Human Development Report, Wokha 2013

## IMPACTS OF MODERN EDUCATION

### SOCIO- CULTURAL

Socio- cultural transformation among the people of this region could not take place without education. Education is the most important single instrument and medium for bringing about changes in the society. The term social change implies changes in attitude, manners, relations and values of people. It also implies change in the styles or ways of living. It may also imply changes in the structure of social institutions. (Agrawal, 1991:108). When change is supposedly for the better, it becomes ‘progress’ which is essentially an evolutionary concept. Change is inevitable. Society is dynamic. Change is inherent in a society. In such a changing society, education plays a two- fold functions: Adjustment to the changing situation, creation of a new order through change in knowledge, new idea and or in other words education for social progress.

The modern education not only revolutionized the cultural ethos of the people but also led them to a new dimension of valued system of life. The living standard of the people changed notably. With the progressive dissemination of modern education, the outlook of the people which formerly remained narrow significantly developed and along with it, appreciation of modern education also received further momentum. The development of broader and healthier outlook of the people enabled them to accept the new trend of change in their society. (Sema, 1992:92). Modern education has been enlightening as it has opened the wide vistas of knowledge to the people which changed their worldview and also resulted in upward mobility of the people. It opened up the frontier of knowledge to the people and helped them to “cross over from the dark past to a bright future” as some writers asserts. It

enabled them to shed their superstitious beliefs and get over their complexes arising out of an isolationist existence. (Singh1972:75)

However, along with all the blessings, modern education has been as devastating as it has been enlightening. It undermined much that was good and valuable in the traditional Naga way of life. The more educated they became the more alienated they began to feel from the traditional way of life which seemed obsolete and primitive.

The introduction of modern education disrupted the indigenous system of learning and redirected them to the new pattern of modern western education, which in turn had substantial influence on the socio- cultural life of the Lothas .The *Chumpo*, the traditional learning institute of the Lothas was a hall- mark of the village in the bygone days. It is not even a hundred years ago, that it was considered as the store house of knowledge. As noted earlier, the idea of the *Chumpo* was such that the young were trained in various skills which were vital for their livelihood and also for the society. Men were taught in handicrafts and other important responsibilities. It was a training ground to be brave warriors, at the same time equip them with the know- how of producing utilities carved and crafted out of wood, bamboo and cane, their natural vegetation. Baskets, furniture, utensils and other useful products were produced with the resources available. The best wood carvings were seen in the *Chumpo*. Similarly, young women were taught in their homes to weave, knit and sew. Other than spending time in the paddy fields, the output of these handloom and handicraft was what generated self-sufficiency. Here, learning process was simple but practice oriented.

The advent of modern education has completely changed the course of the traditional education system. It has been replaced by modern educational institutions. Along with the extinction of the system many important skills and values are discarded.

Besides the skills imparted for self- reliance, important values of life learnt in the *Chumpo* are hard work and dignity of labor, serving the community, civic sense and respect

for elders. The opportunity to earn money in the Government services made many educated Nagas less industrious. Prakash Singh observes, “Some of those who entered Government service have unfortunately succumbed to the vices of the ‘modern’ world. In lethargy, corruption and self- aggrandizement, they would put to shame some of their counterparts in the plains”. (1972:76). The Nagas are a community – oriented people and were keen on physical activity and manual work. They were known to be hard working and committed to undertaking responsibilities for the community. A strong sense of community was maintained among the *Chumpo* members by working together to serve the community. Keeping the surrounding neat and clean was the responsibility of the *Chumpo* boys who organized communal work in the village premises in order to promote cleanliness. Obedience, discipline and the integrity of every individual were the watchwords and the hallmarks of *Chumpo* life. With the advent of modern education and the inevitable inroads of modernization and globalization, these values seem to be eroding and replaced by individualism and self-aggrandizement.

In the present trend, the urgent need facing the Lothas is to try to inculcate some of the education system of the *Chumpo* (Morung) in the present educational curriculum. This not to back-track ourselves to the ancestral era, or this should not translate as anti- western education system, but should be read as improvising the basis of education in which the present system can beautifully blend with some authentic traditional mode for training every citizen.

Modern education comes with technical and mechanical wonders, but the traditional methodology of processing raw materials into finished goods manually should not be led to become obsolete. The traditional craftsmanship is fast becoming a forgotten trade. It can be argued that in the wake of modernity and scientific illumination, the Lotha youth cannot look back to the traditional system for education and be built up to the full potential to face the competitive world. It also needs to be understood that Modernization and Globalization are

inevitable phenomena and in order to catch up in the rat race of modernity, the world view needs to change. However training the young with the basic traditional values and skills will greatly benefit them as individuals and as a society in many aspects. By doing so the children would learn to be self-reliant and at the same time retain some important faculties of their tradition. Traditional story writing, folk song presentations, narration or enacting dramas based on the fore father's life can help in keeping alive the cultural heritage, especially with the younger generation.

The educated young people did not want to go back to the villages, to work with the family in the fields. They preferred white collared jobs in the towns and cities. It meant that the family lost the service of one of its useful members. It also weakened the family bonds, an important characteristic of the traditional Lotha society. Kilemsangla put the situation into perspective, "In our traditional society, family was bound together as one unit by obedience and love. They are well taught during childhood, taking care of them and giving all love and concern to their children. There was no communication gap as such between parents and children. However, the whole pattern of our family system is undergoing a rapid change. We are in such a juncture where father, mother and children are like strangers to one another, we have no respect for one another. Today, children who hunger for love and affection are in search for other means such as drinking, gambling, drugs etc in order to get peace and get out of frustration". (2005:145). With the advancement of modern science and technology, mass media, cyber communications and the internet etc, easy lifestyles are brought to the society and as a result it has brought tremendous change in the traditional family set up with all its good values.

Mention can be made of the entry of a dominant culture or popular culture into the Naga society. Popular culture is a mass culture like the theatre, music, food and so on, where there is a popular participation of people. It is the western influence that marked the beginning



of the popular culture. Along with the inevitable inroads of globalization, the media, internet and other modern technologies offered a new public domain that could re-connect people to some form of culture. In the present society the Korean and the Japanese have become an influential element of the Naga identity. Korean and other popular culture has taken such a hold in their society that the young Nagas started blind imitation of these foreign cultures.

In a land of rich folk songs and music, rock music is gaining popularity and the younger generation seems to enjoy it more than the traditional songs and music. The contemporary festival such as the Hornbill festival is bounded by patterns and actions of social change. Rock contest, selling of foreign goods, fashion night and beauty contests as displayed in the festival are gaining more popularity. This dominant culture is called “youth culture” and with this the contemporary Naga society today presents a highly westernized culture and at this pace, it would be difficult for the future generation to remember their past cultural traditions.

The rise of popular culture is a challenge to the Naga culture and tradition. Looking at the present scenario where the globalizing factor has great impact on any society the Lothas are not lacking behind. In all aspect their society is going through the inevitable historical phase of change where the old is replaced by the new. Change is inevitable because society is dynamic, not static. It would not be logical to try to isolate the tribe from the influence of the dominant culture, the media and the entertainment industry. Their society would then be left in denial and left behind in the Global rat race for development and modernization. But this change must not uproot the people’s identity and culture completely, because the moment they shy away from their roots they lose their identity.

Today, it is heartening to see that efforts are being made to preserve the Naga cultural heritage. A spirit of renaissance has been developing especially among the educated young

generation who are taking responsibility of spreading awareness among the people, ironically made possible by modernization and Globalization where bridges are made across the world through the technological achievements.

Whenever two cultures meet, one tribal and the other modern the resultant reaction is generally witnessed in three phases. In the first phase, the modern culture which is essentially more dynamic and aggressive, produces a shattering blow. All the indigenous values appear outdated, outmoded, and out of tune with the requirements of the day. In the second phase, the tribal community tries to find its feet. Social reformers appear on the scene and try to convince people with the good points of the old culture. It is a period of uncertainty and confusion when the community finds itself hamstrung between the attraction of the new and the attachment to the old. The third phase is a logical development of the second. It may witness a synthesis of the two cultures and giving stability and balance to the community. (Singh,1972:pp67,68) . Today, the Naga in general appear to have gone through the first and second phases and moving toward the third phase. In the case of the Naga society, where modern education and globalization which is the inevitable meets the heritage of tradition and culture, there is a synthesis of culture, which results in the hybrid culture. In any process of change partial displacement of the old cultural pattern is inevitable. However, the new cultural pattern is also not adopted in totality. In such a situation, the emerging product is neither the old nor the new but a mutation of the two. T.K. Oommen wisely articulates, “Life science taught us that mutation leads to healthier and creative offspring. But when it comes to the cultural world, human beings tend to resist it, which is surprising. Because all cultures consists of assets and liabilities; the ingenuity of a people depends upon selective retention of the old and selective rejection of the new. Cultural change should not be visualized as a package deal”. (Subba et al.,2009:13).

Today the most important question confronting the tribe is can education help the people revive some of their past glories such as community spirit, justice and equality, integrity and ethical living, fear of and reverence for god, as well as making good use of the new vistas of opportunity and livelihood? Can we incorporate the best from the dominant culture in order that the best in our culture and economy may grow together?. Cultural hybridization is not simply the co- existence of the old and the new but an innovative leap to cope with cultural dead end. As Oommen articulates, “All cultures, if denied of occasional breath of cultural fresh air from outside will die of cultural claustrophobia”. (ibid). That is why acculturation is important. However, as noted above, what the tribe should attempt at this juncture is spatial and selective acculturation.

## ECONOMIC

During the pre- colonial period, not only the Lothas but all the Nagas lived in self-sufficient closed village economies. The main occupation of the Lothas was agriculture and animal husbandry. They had self- sufficient economy and had no contact with the outside world. Apart from hunting, fishing and cultivating, the people were part time craftsmen. They made all their household needs according to their domestic requirements. Women were the main producers of clothes. They spun cotton into threads and clothes were woven for the family needs. The local economy was based on barter system and there was no market centre. The trade was conducted through vendors and peddlers. The Lothas had a primitive system of coins called ‘*Chabili rang*’ (small piece of Iron) but it was not used widely. Merchandise comprising of woven yarns, livestock, food grains, agricultural implements, household wares were interchanged in the community.

The only industry of the tribe was the cottage industry such as weaving, pottery, black smithy, carpentry, cane and bamboo works and other handicrafts. The demand for manufactures other than the traditional was limited.

Their needs were few and they could somehow manage to be self- sufficient of their basic requirement of food, clothing and shelter in their own way. In fact, salt and agricultural implements, the two indispensable things, they get by bartering their agricultural produce like ginger, cotton, chilly etc, with the plainsmen of neighboring Assam. This was the condition even at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It was in 1876, Wokha the home of the Lothas was occupied as the district head quarter of the Naga Hills by British India. The frequent harassment given by the Lothas to the British survey party bringing about the death of John Butler compelled the Government to take a decision to bring the Lotha area under regular administration. Accordingly prompt and decisive action was taken to establish the district head quarter at Wokha, and it was occupied in 1876. Two years later the head quarter was shifted to Kohima, the present capital of the State. Wokha remained below the status of a sub- division until 1957, when the Naga Hills Tuensang Area NHTA was formed and Wokha became a sub- division. (Ghosh,1979:2). With the introduction of the British Rule came improved means of communication and education. They began to improve their ways of cultivation for higher productivity. The use of money as a medium of exchange was introduced.

Towards the close of the British administration, some educated Lothas were appointed as agriculture demonstrators and there was progress of scientific agriculture in the area. Some of them are Wonimo Murry of Okotso, the first Naga to become over- seer in 1912. Chonsumo Ngullie, of Okotso Village, trained as Agriculture demonstrator at Burnihat, Shillong, Rev. E. M. Mozhui who served as Assistant farm Manager and later as Agriculture Inspector between 1949 and 1959, until he resigned and joined Baptist Mission Centre,

Vankhosung for Bible translation works, P.E Ezung, educated at the mission school and later joined Agricultural Training Institute in Jorhat, entered Government service as Demonstrator till 1959 when he joined the NNC etc. Being far sighted, Wonimo Murry, after being appointed an over- seer in 1912 could see the harmful effects of Jhum cultivation in the long run. He, therefore, tried to educate the people by explaining and pleading with them to adopt the method of wet- rice cultivation. His pioneering efforts were later emphasized by the later successive governments. The wet- rice cultivation area called “Wonimo Tsulho” at Changki valley still stands as a testimony to his efforts. ( Kikon,1993:11).

For the first time, the farmers were introduced to the use of fertilizers such as ammonia sulphate, super phosphate, urea of potash etc to increase the output of crops. Proper demonstrations were done to make effective use of such fertilizers. (Ghosh,1979:73). Besides, demonstrations were done on the use of improved seeds of potato, paddy, maize, sugarcane, etc. fruits cultivation was encouraged. The people formerly used traditional remedies against pests which cause damage to plantations by performing sacrifices and offering prayers to the spirits. One such ceremony was the *Mvuthan Ratsen*, performed when the crop is about half grown, to ward off danger to the standing crops from insects and pests. The people began to use scientific chemical remedies. Besides, the preservation of forests through planting of trees was taught to the people.

The general education of the people at the hands of the missionaries opened up the eyes of the Lothas to a new world. Education laid down the basis for all future developments. With good education, a number of Lothas had entered the Government service. Many others became social and political leaders. It may be noted that these illustrious people from the tribe were the first to receive education through the mission schools. Many of them were from the villages where the first churches were established in the Lotha region. Education had been able to create a group of Intelligentsia in the community. They in turn impressed on the

people the need of education for employment opportunities which would supplement their resources from agriculture.

The economic condition of the people showed a change during the First World War (1914-18) and the Second World War (1939-45). During the two wars many Lothas earned wage as laborers, guides, interpreters etc. Some of them joined the military service too. There was a great demand for building materials for construction of houses and roads which were promptly supplied by the local people and it became a source of earning profit. Men were readily available as the wage was quite high. In the past, the people solely depended on agriculture and had no other option to earn for their livelihood. But gradually, with the contact with the outside world, the people had found various means of earning from other than agriculture. The two great Wars brought the people into greater contact with the outside world and that was the beginning of a new era in the lives of the people and in their outlook. (Ghosh, 1979:122). The economic condition of the people showed a change and there was great participation of the people in improvement of their living conditions and much enthusiasm for education.

After the Second World War, the people who had gained experience in new jobs and earned money did not want to go back to cultivation. Therefore, they took to new professions like business, contract works, teachers in the Schools and other Government service.

However, with the opening up of the district through better network of communication and greater contact with the urban settlements, the people were exposed to manufactured goods from outside which in turn had an impact on the local cottage industries. Modern industries such as tailoring replaced the traditional weaving of cloths for the family. With the progress that education made in all fields, the modern tailoring was introduced in every town and even in the villages. This was a new thing not only for the Lothas but also for the whole of rural Nagaland. Many families also individually owned sewing and knitting machines, even

in the villages. The traditional system of weaving cloths was thus affected. Cane and bamboo works, wood carving, traditional blacksmithy, pottery and carpentry were important age-old industries which the Lothas inherited from the forefathers and which had an important place in the village economy. But their production was largely reduced owing to the availability of cheaper products from outside the district.

The exposure to the outside world nevertheless, broadened their outlook and they carried new ideas of developing their cultivation, various arts and crafts and exploitation of forest resources. In recent times, in order to improve the economic productivity efforts has been made by different governmental agencies/ departments to create awareness about the scope and importance of integrated farming practices for substantial livelihood among the rural people. To generate a substantial amount of income, farmers started inter- cropping of Jhum field with horticultural crops like areca nut, sugarcane, orange, pineapple, coconut, etc was encouraged. Mixed livestock farming involving fishery, piggery, and poultry are also found in many villages. The importance of plantation crops such as tea, coffee and rubber is well- known. Similarly forest trees of importance including fodder and fuel trees as well as canes and bamboos are of great relevance to the development of the region. (Ovung, 2012: 42). The traditional outlook has changed considerably due to education and rapid modernization that has facilitated to improve their socio- economic condition to a great extent.

The Lotha Land is rightly called the “Land of Plenty” because of her rich mineral and hydrocarbon deposits, hydro power potential, soil fertility and abounding flora and fauna. (District Human Development report, 2013). But the question confronting us today is Can education help the people to tap the resources judiciously, protect the flora and fauna, and enhance livelihood through afforestation? The Lothas have traditionally been hunters and always felt that hunting and consuming meat of the wild animals and birds is a way of life and

blessing. This practice has led to very less sighting of birds and wild animals in the forests of Wokha. The awareness that has reached the Pangti, Aasha and Sungro villages through the “Natural Nagas”, a wildlife organization has been very receptive and encouraging. The people are now beginning to realize that through conservation, many avenues for an alternative livelihood can be availed and benefited while co- existing with wildlife.

‘Conservation India’ estimates that the single largest congregation of Amur Falcons in the world takes place in Wokha district when millions of the birds arrive and roost in and around the Doyang reservoir during the month of October and November. (District Human Development Report 2014). Peoples of the surrounding villages of the area hunt and trap them with fishing nets, ending the journey of thousands of the birds on their migratory path. The hunting and trapping of the birds caught the attention of the international community and has put Nagaland in the Red List. India being a signatory to the convention of Migratory Species, it is mandatory for the State Government to protect the birds while passing through the state.

Mount Tiyi, which lies atop the town of Wokha is the highest mountain in the district reaching an altitude of 1976 mts above sea level. It is believed to be the abode of the spirits by the Lothas. Even the neighboring tribes like the Semas believe that the spirit of their dead goes to the caves found towards the eastern stretch of the mountain. Beautiful Rhododendrons grow on the hilltop which was believed to be the reserves of the spirits. The Lotha ancestors passed down the belief that the flowers should not be plucked without performing appropriate rituals, lest the offended spirits would bring down hailstorms and untoward incidences. The forefathers perhaps wisely evolved such legends to protect the abundant flora of the area. Mt. Tiyi was once a paradise for birds and a transit point for the three species of the Hornbill. However, the area does not have healthy population of birds and other wild animals as a result of hunting and poaching by the villagers. Besides, deforestation of the area is witnessed. The forest cover in Mt.Tiyi, therefore needs immediate attention and the habitat restoration to



revive the eco- system and save the various species of flora and fauna should be taken up. This could be done only by educating the people, especially the young generation and making them aware about the benefits of the forest resources for enhancing the people's livelihood. Efforts should be made to involve the Educational Institutions and local bodies like the Village Councils, Town Committee, Women Societies etc.

## POLITICAL

The introduction of western education initiated by the missionaries brought the people in touch with modern civilization. Despite the fact that there were certain defects in both the missionary and Government policy in education it had brought enlightenment to the people. The Christian oriented education in the mission schools has pushed the hitherto isolated tribe out of the seclusion of centuries into open ideas, ideals and western civilization. They were taught to live in peace, love and tolerance at the same time they were brought nearer to the political, economic and social ideas of the west. (Venuh, 2005:56).

Education and the growth of schools increased the mobility of the tribe. At first, they were brought out from the village to the towns where the mission schools were located. The earliest converts among the Lothas were sent to Impur Mission School in Mokokchung district. Gradually, they were brought into contact with the neighbouring states and with Indians. Apart from the mission work at Impur, the missionaries encouraged higher education. Many of the Lothas went to Furkating, Golaghat and Jorhat mission schools to study. The increased mobility of the people due to education had opened to them the wide horizon of knowledge and they began to learn about liberty, equality and fraternity, which in turn led to the development of political consciousness among them.

As a consequence of the growth of modern education, the Naga society witnessed gradual tendency for social cohesion the characteristic of which was conspicuously lacking among them in pre- colonial period. Piketo sema asserts that the colonial administration and the modern education led to the emergence of a new middle class, the native intellectuals or the intelligentsia. This middle class not only became economically better off through its earning opportunities as job holders but also had developed a new socio- political awareness of its own society, which later eventually gave rise to the idea of Naga Nationalism. It was the educated Nagas who spearheaded the formation of the Naga Club, Tribal Council and the Naga National Council. (Sema:1992:141). Besides, regional and international events also influenced the Naga Society.

Many Lothas who were among the first to get Education joined the cause for Naga Independence. Mr. Lidemo Shitiri, son of Rev. Ibonsao the first ordained Reverend among the Lothas and pastor of the First Church, Okotso in the Lotha area was educated at Golaghat and Jorhat, Assam. On returning after Education he chose to join the Naga Independence Movement and held the office of the Chairman, Lotha Tribal Council Underground. Mr. Mhondamo Kithan received his early education at the Mission school Vankhosung, Government High school, Kohima and graduated in Arts from the Scottish Church College, Calcutta in 1948, the first from the tribe. On graduation, he worked as chairman of the Lotha Tribal Council, Secretary of the Naga National Council and then President of the Naga National Council (NNC). On the formation of a full-fledged statehood of Nagaland, he was elected to the Nagaland Legislative Assembly in 1964 as a Nagaland Nationalist organization Party and appointed as minister for Education.

The educated Lothas also came into contact not only with the Indians but also with some Europeans, particularly during the two great wars. During the First world war ( 1914-18) some Lothas along with fellow Nagas helped the British Government in the form of

supplying coolies and went to European countries for that work. It may be mentioned that during the First World War some 2000 Nagas were recruited for Labour corps to France and 400 of them were Lothas. (Ghosh, 1979: 25). The British authorities put Shanjamo Jungi of Yikhum village in- charge of the Naga Labour corps. It may be noted that Shanjamo was the first Lotha, in fact the first Naga, to visit the United States of America in 1905.( Kikon, 1993: 4). Educated under Dr. Clark at Impur Mission School, he became a pioneer evangelist among the Lothas. Due to his zeal in the mission service he was taken to the States by Rev. S. A. Perrine. There he studied at Mt. Hermon school, and passed the eighth standard.

While other Nagas lived in seclusion in their respected villages, education and the new faith had given Shanjamo the opportunity to travel worldwide and enrich his knowledge. Besides the USA he visited UK, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Egypt, Palestine and several cities in India like Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Agra, Jaipur and Gauhati. He became instrumental in enriching the Lothas in knowledge and widening their intellectual and mental horizon besides preaching the word of God to them.

Soon after the closure of the war, the Naga Labour force who have returned from France, together with the British officials and other leading Nagas like the Goanburas, Dobashis and Government servants formed the Naga club in 1918. (Venuh, 2005:57). The objective of the club was primarily to look after the welfare of the Nagas by the promotion of understanding, development of fraternal feeling and unity among the Nagas. It acted as the common platform for the Nagas to discuss the question of their identity. Its formation thus provided the much needed social and political foundation to the Naga tribes and was symbolic of the emerging sense of solidarity among the Nagas. (Sema,1992:142). Although the club was formed with the primary objective of looking after the welfare of the Naga people within the British administration, it also served as a platform for the emerging Naga nationalism, where the new educated class had a great role to play. Among the Lothas, the first to received

education became preachers of the Gospel. But through education they had also realized the importance of educating the people for a greater cause of the tribe. Therefore they were not only preachers but also teachers and patriots.

During the Second World War the Lothas too helped the British Government in fighting the Japanese who invaded Kohima in April 1944 and turned it into a battle field. The help was mainly in the form of coolies, advisors of coolies and supplier of men and materials. P. F. Adams, the SDO of Mokokchung recruited 500 young Nagas as Labor Corps. Libemo Tungoe was taken as an advisor of the group. Mr. Khyothungo Ezung, Mr. Benathung and Mr. Phyolumo were appointed as head men to look after the welfare of the Labor corps. But above all, they came into greater contact with other people. As they met different people, soldiers as well as civil, their worldview was broadened, sanitation and life-style affected. This is the beginning of wider outlook and social intercourse with others. These people, exposed to the developed nations for the first time were instilled with new ideas, inspiration and visions. They came to know the value of education, most of whom became advocate of modern education among the Lothas.

This exposure created an impact on their minds especially in relation to their awareness of their own emerging identity. (Sanyu, 2008: 123).under the command of H. C Barnes, the then Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, Wonimo Murry of Okotso village, the first Naga to become Sub- Overseer in 1912 was sent to France and England during the First World War as head of a Labor Corps. In France the Nagas were engaged in road construction in the battle front without proper food and clothing in the severe climatic condition. Besides, the Nagas were not treated at par with the others and there was much discrimination against them. Wonimo Murry could not tolerate the discrimination and complained to the British Commander about it, little knowing the consequences of such 'indicipline' by a Naga who was supposed to obey without question. On return to the Naga Hills in 1918, he was

summarily dismissed from the Imperial service. Wonimo, with his inborn Naga pride retorted, “I am leaving the job today, but a day will come when the British will have to leave India’. (Kikon,1993:12). The war experience helped the Lothas to learn about ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity and fostered a sense of unity and oneness, as Colin Johnson articulates, “It may be said that on the battlefields of France and in the trenches, the iron spearhead of a new Naga Nationalism was forged”. (1986:17). The world wars were a great experience to the Lothas. They came back with broadened outlook as Singh opines “Men who had gone in Lengtas came back in trousers”. (1972: 76). These men saw the outside world for the first time and they returned to their homeland with new ideas and new standards.

To unite the Nagas and to take up post- war reconstruction work Charles Pawsey, then Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills formed a body known as the “Naga Hills District Tribal Council”. In April 1946, at a meeting held at Wokha, the organization was re-christened as “Naga National Council”.(NNC). On 19 June 1946, the Council submitted a 4-point memorandum stating that:

1. This Naga National Council stands for the solidarity of all the Naga tribes, including those of the un administered areas;
2. This Council strongly protests against the grouping of Assam with Bengal;
3. The Naga Hills should be continuously included in an autonomous Assam in a free India, with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interests of the Nagas and the Naga ; and
4. The Naga tribes should have separate electorate. (Yonuo,1974:161).

The NNC was initially composed of 29 members who represented the tribes on the principle of proportional representation, i e, one member for every 10,000 population. Over time it received popular support and became a mass movement having a youth wing and a

women wing. With the emergence of the NNC, a determined effort was made towards self-determination by the Nagas.

Among the educated Lothas who took active part in this political development was Mr. Khodao Yanthan who became a lifelong Naga Nationalist. He was educated at his native Lakhuti village mission school and the Vankhosung Mission School, wokha. After passing class 4 in 1941, he taught at Aitepyong School during which period he joined the Naga Labour Corps to Imphal during the Japanese invasion. When they were in the Burmese border, Imphal was heavily bombarded by the Japanese Air Force. Hence they retreated and returned home. He joined the Christian High School, Jorhat in 1942. When he was studying in class 9 in 1944, he was taken by the British Army as a guide to Wokha to combat the Japanese Army who had already taken possession of Wokha and Yikhum. The Japanese however retreated from Wokha. He went back to school and graduated from the Serampore College, Calcutta in 1951. On his return from college he became the President of the Lotha Tribal Council in March 1951.

During his tenure as President of the Lotha Tribal Council, Mr. Khodao discouraged the traditional practice of abandoning house and family property on the event of tragic death occurring to any member of the family. (Kikon,1993:50). He actively participated in the Plebiscite work of the Naga National Council and became an executive member of the NNC. When the Indian Government launched military operation in Nagaland, Khodao went underground and escaped to Pakistan in 1956. He landed at London in 1962 and continued to work for Naga Independence along with A.Z.Phizo, the then president of the NNC. His appeal to all factions of the Naga underground was to unite and fight for Naga Independence. It was these educated people who were able to raise the level of socio- political consciousness among their people and motivated them to strive for justice, peace, prosperity and equality

The primary motive behind the introduction of modern education was basically the outcome of the necessity to protect and advance their interests, ie, evangelization for the Missionaries and colonial administration for the British. Besides they held the civilizing responsibility which is known as the “white Man’s burden” (LaDuke,2005:pp11-12) as their shared goal. But it has awakened among the people the consciousness to protect their rights, and also to preserve their distinct identity through widening of their mental and geographical horizons.

## WOMEN

The impact that modern Education had on Lotha women is tremendous. Before the coming of Christianity and Education, the position of the women in the community was not an enviable one. The men gave their time to fighting and hunting, leaving all the rest of the work to be done by the women. They were under the absolute authority of their men-folk and had few civil rights and no possessions. When head hunting was forbidden and the hunting of wild animals restricted, the men found it difficult to adjust themselves to the changing situation, and in the transition period often spent their days in idleness, thinking it degrading to do what had always been regarded as women’s work.

In the early days of the church it was difficult for the men to realize that Christianity was for the women as well as for themselves, and the women had so much work to do that they had little time to attend services or to learn. The men were reluctant to allow any changes in the life of their womenfolk, and the women, feeling inferior to the men, hesitated to come forward. But after a good deal of opposition and reluctance girls were sent to the mission schools. And the boys soon found that the girls have minds to compete with theirs in school

work. At first slowly, and then very rapidly, the women came into the church and proved themselves worthy members.

Traditionally, the life of a Lotha individual centered round a self-contained village society. There was the fact of the ever present threat of head hunting raids. It is amazing the extent to which this practice conditioned the life of a village and its people. The villages were defensively situated and it required the men folk to provide the needful security for the protection of the village. The training of males in the *Chumpo* (Bachelor's dormitory) was oriented to this goal. Such a war culture promoted a patriarchal society. Many of the deliberations of the village council involved matters related to warfare and defense in which women were not involved. In this situation the women folk were relegated to the household chores and did not participate in decision making. Eventually, the attitude towards women's status was also determined by these factors. They were the 'weaker' sex and always had a subordinate status. However, progressive modernization brought on by the adoption of Christianity and modern education has gradually altered the contemporary situation of the Lotha women and they have begun participating in diverse modern activities. Her role is now not limited to the home as was in the traditional society but also outside the home. But some of the age-old attitudes still persist today.

To understand the extent of the impact of modern education on the Lotha women, the status of the women in the traditional society is traced briefly.

#### Economic matters

(a). *Property rights*: In so far as the Lotha customary law is concerned, women enjoy least privilege in the matter of inheritance and property rights. The Lotha society was patrilineal and patriarchal. The laws of inheritance follow a male line. The daughter had less chance to



inherit the ancestral property like land, houses etc. This ancestral property is called "*Pyimtsu Motsui echu eli*" which could be owned only by the sons. In the absence of a son to inherit the father's property, the father's immediate male relatives were eligible to divide the property between them.

In contrast to the Ao tribe who give the largest share to the eldest son, among the Lothas the youngest son is entitled to a lion's share of property reckoned in terms of granaries, cash and other movable properties. Immovable property like land is shared by all brothers. The youngest son gets the house of the parents because he is considered to be the care taker of his parents in their old age. Moreover, he is to support his unmarried brothers and sisters for which he is assigned a lion's share of his parent's wealth. (Ghosh, 1979:45). In all these division of property, movable and immovable, except some minor items, the daughter is excluded.

Because of the patrilineal system, ownership rights in common property are restricted to males alone. Women folk are generally excluded from inheritance of any property, but they can enjoy the property as long as they remain within the circle of the family but as soon as they are married, such privileges cease to exist. (Ovung, 2012:62). An unmarried girl has right over her personal property like clothing, ornaments and weaving equipments which are gifted to her on her marriage. In some cases, a father out of affection for the daughter may gift to her a share of his property but such gifts were to be given in the presence of the kinsmen as witnesses.

The position of the widow in regard to inheritance was not favorable. On the event of the death of her husband the widow retains the house and all other properties but under the cover of her sons and if she does not remarry. However, the properties could not be sold at her will. It was the duty of the widow to shoulder the responsibility of looking after the household and she continues to control the husband's property until her sons inherit. If the

widow remarries she was required to surrender all her claims over the deceased husband's property.

Lotha women face rights to inherit and own property that are largely determined by these traditional values, norms and customs. The traditional patriarchal structure and ethos are largely intact even at present. There is no reservation for Lotha women in inheriting property except through will or gift. This system remains rigid even today in spite of the many social changes.

(b). *Occupation and livelihood*: Traditionally, the occupation of the Lotha women was first a housewife and mother, and secondly, a cultivator. The women folk manage the majority of the domestic works. In fact, the husband's role in domestic affairs is very less. As a housewife, the woman is expected to fetch water, cook, collect firewood and look after the children. Besides, she is expected to know the art of weaving, spinning cotton, rearing of domestic animals etc, and above all bear the arduous task of bearing and rearing children.

The Lotha women were also the main work force not only in family but in agricultural and allied activities. Harvested Paddy is carried in their bamboo baskets by walking through several miles of hilly tracts. Men are attached only to agricultural works leaving all household works to the women. The woman is confined to the kitchen and the Jhum fields and had no voice in the day to day affairs of the village. Nevertheless, the women spare no sacrifice for her husband and family. The girl child is taught the virtue of patience early. By the time she attains puberty, she learns to wake up early to cook for the family and fetch water from the nearby spring. At noon she goes to the jungle to collect firewood and edible leaves and also gathers and cook food for the domestic animals. She looks after the younger siblings and carries around the youngest on her back. She helps the mother in pounding of rice and brewing *Soko*, rice beer. The girl is expected to know the art of weaving and spinning cotton which she learns early by watching and helping the elder sisters and mothers, eagerly waiting

to try her hands on the loom. The girl also work in the Jhum fields as a member of the “yingaeden”, the age group working company.

Even at present the division of work is within the traditional framework. The mother is expected to manage all the household chores as well as much of the field work, though the men folk help to a certain extent. Within this traditional structure, the girl’s duty was to work and not to earn. Hence the girl child remained illiterate and ended up as a helping hand at home, the practice of which is still found in the remote and less developed villages of the Lotha region. With the introduction of modern education, Lotha women are now in Government jobs and other private sector jobs. But it is found that men folk want women to join the Government jobs not because they want them to take part in decision making bodies but to make a living out of it or to contribute to the family income. Today, to keep pace with the fast changing society and the increased needs of the family, it is rather encouraged that a woman should do whatever is in her capacity to support and share the family income.

#### Socio- political matters

(a). *Decision making*: Though women dominate in economic activities, their participation in the political processes and governance is practically low. So far as the Lotha customary law is concerned, the women are ignored in decision making whether within the family or outside the family. The administration of the village solely rests on the men folk. Traditionally, the Lotha villages were ruled by *Ekhung* (Chief), the position of which was not hereditary. The most suitable man becomes chief by force of character. A woman is considered as not having the required characteristic to become a chief. With the coming of the British rule, the post of the *Ekhung* was ended and the villages were then managed by a council of old men of influence with a headman selected by the Government. The council was composed of the

*Sotsoi, Tongti, Chochang and Pangi*, each dimension having specific tasks of looking after the villages. A woman never represented this traditional council. Women are still not allowed to become Dobashis or Goanburas, the custodians of the Naga customary laws.

Till today, no woman has ever been elected to the Nagaland Legislative Assembly. The only time a Lotha woman contested, even though she was not elected was in 1969 when Renchilo Kinghen contested from 37 Tiyi Assembly Constituency of Wokha. No Lotha woman has become the Chairperson of the Wokha Town Council or the Village councils. Women were never a part of the decision making processes.

(b). *Marriage and Morals*: In the past marriages were usually arranged by the families concerned. Marriage by negotiation is an accepted norm, even though some instances of love marriage also exist. As a preliminary to an arranged marriage, a match maker plays an important role to bring about consent to the boy's proposal by the girl's relatives. A boy after having decided to marry a certain girl sends either his mother or some elderly female relation to the girl's parents. If they are agreeable, she goes again with *soko* (rice beer) to the members of the girl's family, which is sipped by them indicating that the proposal has been accepted. The marriage price is then discussed and settled by the two families. After finalizing the date of the marriage, a bundle of firewood especially cut by the boy is placed at a designated place in the girl's house to indicate that the girl is already engaged. From then on the boy was required to work in the future father-in-law's house for a year.

The bride's price varies from village to village. According to Zantsemo Ngullie of N.Longidang Village, in Nrung (Upper Range), the bride's price is as follows: The price paid to the girl's family is collectively called *Oman*. The *oman* is divided into a number of items. The first payment is the *Chuka*. This was paid to the girl's maternal grandfather or maternal uncle paid in cash and kind, usually some amount of money and about 10 kgs of salt. The

second is *Ezuman*, the cost of bringing her up. As mentioned earlier, after the *tsoyuta* ie, engagement, the boy is required to live at the future father in law's house for a year during which he was to perform several tasks. If the boy prefers to pay compensation instead of working in the father in law's house, the *Nvanman* (absent fine) and *oki ntsoman* (not helping in building), *otssung nchuman* (Not bringing firewood) and *oson ntsoman* (not building the granary) are taken. The amount was between 2 to 10 rupees. Then the *Hanlam*, usually 50 kgs of pork is given to the father in law. The meat was meant for distributing to the relatives and clan members of the girl. The marriage ceremony being completed, gift in terms of cash, shawls, animals and other articles were also handed to the couple. When she marries, the girl becomes part and parcel of her husband. She is expected to move and behave by the defined norms and customs of the community.

Polygamy was practiced by the Lothas before the coming of Christianity. J.P.Mills wrote "A well to do Lotha has two or often three wives. Very occasionally a man will have four or even five. All are of equal status, though the oldest wife naturally occupies a position of authority in the household." (1922:154). An ironic norm in the Lotha traditional society is that the traditional elites are justified in keeping more than one wife. According to Mhathung Tungoe, polygamy "was confined only to the village chiefs, great warriors and to the wealthy section of the people". (Zehol.ed, 1998:32). Athungo Ovung identifies the Lotha traditional elites as the *Ephyoesan* (village councilors), the *Ekhyo Ekhung* (the successful head hunters/ warriors) and the *Pentazutaii echueli* (rich men). (2012:pp 106,107). Among the Lothas all wealthy people cannot be included in the Elite category unless they performed the *Osho*, the feast of merit and thus earning respect and recognition from the community. Ironically, it was in this honored and respected section of the community that polygamy prevailed.

One can also note the practice of levirate and sororate among the Lothas, giving us the impression that the women were taken as "property of men" to a certain extent. A man who

expects to be away from home for some time gave his brothers permission to have marital relations with his wife during his absence. On the death of her husband, a woman is expected to go to the dead man's brother. A man who takes the dead brother's wife performs no marriage ceremony and pays no marriage price. If the widow remarries with another clan, the late husband's clan takes from the new husband a marriage price equal to the first marriage price. Another point which makes the women as an object is, in the olden days the game of dice was popular among the Lothas, where a man can lose everything he owned. After betting all his money, land, houses etc, he could bet his wife without her consent. The winner has every right to keep his wife for a certain period.

In case of divorce, the woman is allowed to claim only the thread, the chicken she brought during the marriage, along with the clothes she wears. Ornaments given to her by the husband must be returned to him.

#### Religious matters

The Lotha traditional religion revolved around rites and rituals which were performed by the *pvuti* (priest). But there were some rituals performed by the women even though in a subordinate role as a wife of the performer/ host or as the wife of the *pvuti*. An example is the *Poniratsen* which was a ceremony for the married couple as a sort of initiation into married life. This was performed exclusively by the old women entrusted to check the omen of the couple. Another example is the rain dance performed by the women only to bring down rain. In times of drought, the women gather and sing and dance at night. It is a kind of sacred dance to induce rain. (Ghosh, 1979:45). The dance by the women to avert drought and to bring rain perhaps indicate that the women are more worried about the crop failure than the men folk. And it is a fact that women work harder in the fields than the men.

Though women are regarded in certain ceremonies, she was considered as a taboo in other matters. Certain activities, food and places were taboo for women, and not for men. Before hunting trips and head hunting expeditions women were restricted to even touch the men's weapons like spears, shields and daos or machetes. Women were not allowed access to the *Chumpo* (Bachelor's dormitory). Males are supposed to possess six strengths whereas the female only five. Thus, males were christened on the sixth day and female on the fifth day. This age- old custom is still followed indicating that the notion of female as weaker sex is very much present in the Lotha society today.

Even after the advent of Christianity, the women were the last to get education or to get admitted into the church committees or administration. Women were not allowed to become head of the Churches. With modern education and the broadening of the outlook, the situation is changing, and the Lotha women now constitutes an important part of the Church, contributing in material as well as spiritual. Many women have taken up theological study and work. But whereas, the involvement of women in church activities has increased among the Lothas, no women have ever been ordained as a church minister or a Reverend.

## THE NEW HORIZON

It was in this state that Christianity and Education brought solace and empowerment to the Lotha women. The Christian missionaries with their philanthropic zeal devoted much of their activities by paying special attention towards women. Initially the parents were reluctant to send their girls to school, not wanting to lose a hand at home as well as in the field. Moreover they had to get them married early. In some cases the girls were sent to the mission

schools but were allowed to read only up to standard 5 or 6, or just enough to read and write and be able to sing from the hymn book. The Rev and Mrs Houston, appointed as missionaries to the Lothas during 1947- 53, were the harbinger of women education and vocational training among the Lothas. After getting acquainted with the Lothas they realized that it was the women who needed help as they were the most backward. They decided to start a training school for women but there was no one qualified to be the teacher. With the help of a local teacher Zanponi, the Houstons started the Lotha women's training school at Vankhosung.

Each Church in the villages were requested to send at least one girl of sixteen years or older with good moral character to the school. But the men folk and the pastors were reluctant. They could not effort to take the girls out of the fields and send them to school. The opening day of the school had only one student. In two weeks time, however, seven girls enrolled. Zanponi and Harriet taught them life of Christ, the Christian women's work in her home, Church and the village. The girls were also taught sewing, knitting and music. Thus, for the first time vocational training was introduced for the upliftment of socio- economic life of the Lotha women and their families. The enrollment increased the following years and many girls became women leaders in their village churches and union meetings. Thus with the efforts of these missionaries a new day dawned for the Lotha women. In the 1952 Lotha Christian Association held in Riphyim village, about 800 women attended, women who rose to a new life of service and responsibility because of knowing Christ.

The advent and spread of Christianity in the Lotha area had, to a large extent helped in doing away with the rude misconception that educating a girl child was a waste as she would sooner than later marry and go off to her in- law's home. Nagaland, at present, has a literacy rate of 79.55 percent according to the 2011 census. The female literacy rate is 70.01 percent against 82.75 percent of male. Now there is no shortage of highly educated females in the



various disciplines. Many females are in the workforce be it administration, police, education, medicine, engineering, journalism, etc., both in the private and Government sector. In such a situation of time, it is most heartening to note that the female literacy rate of Wokha district with 84.48 percent is higher than the state's overall of 79.55 percent. In Wokha district, the enrolment of girls in the primary, upper primary and secondary schools is more or less equal compared with that of boys. According to the District Human Development Report 2013, the total enrolment for primary schools in Wokha district in 2012 was 20441, out of which 10612 were girls and 9829 were boys. For upper primary school, out of 8117 students enrolled, 4136 were girls and 3981 were boys. In secondary school, there were 1478 girls and 1489 boys out of 2967 enrolled students. (District Human Development Report, Wokha. 2013).

Today the Lotha women had come a long way with education. The notion that women were not competent to participate in the intellectual caliber prevailed over a considerable stretch of time. When Nagaland achieved statehood in 1963, there was only one female graduate in Wokha district, Renchilo Kinghen. But the Lotha women had done themselves proud by making up for the lost time and making an impact in every field and arena. The age-old prejudices toward the female child, has started to gradually die out. Daughters are not denied their rights when it comes to equal education and even inheriting a portion of the parent's properties. Thungjano Tsanglao, President of the Lotha Eloehoho, the apex body of Lotha women asserts that, "The emergence of so many educated and qualified women in the district has led to visible changes in the mindsets of the men". (District Human Development Report, 2013: 140). On this front, she sees positive changes taking place which can only be good for the progress of the Lotha society.

## WOMEN WELFARE ORGANISATIONS

### (1). Kyong Eloë Hoho. (Lotha women Organization)

This is the apex body of Lotha women of Wokha district formed on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1995 with office of president, vice president, General Secretary, joint secretary, treasurer, finance secretary, publicity & information secretary and Executive members. The body is an NGO with aims and objectives to (a) work for the Lotha womenfolk (b) promote unity among the women in Lotha community and the people in general. (c) In time of grievances as a pressure group to bring justice. (d) Help the Lotha women and the people in generating peaceful atmosphere, by working along with the other NGOs in Wokha district. (e) Educate the Lotha women and make them good leaders both in secular and religious, so that they can represent the Lotha women for a better cause and (f) Preserve and promote the Lotha Culture.

The organization has been working for the welfare of the Lotha women and the people in general by collaborating with the administration and the police and other NGOs. They had launched anti- liquor campaigns and fights against anti- social activities such as sale of liquor and drugs, rapes and violence against women. Along with the Nagaland Commission for women, Naga Mothers Association and other NGOs, the Hoho has been working to review the Naga customary law regarding marriage, divorce and inheritance.

The Kyong Eloë Hoho also encourages the Lotha women in the economical fields like agriculture, which is the main occupation and in which the rural women depended. To encourage them to produce more local products, sales day are organized for them. Through seminars and other programmes, the Hoho is educating the women folk in sanitation, healthcare, AIDS and HIV etc. Along with the rest of the Naga women, the Lothas are also

lacking behind in the participation in decision- making. Thus, the Kyong Eloë Hoho is working for the implementation of the 33% reservation for women in the municipal which is still pending in the Supreme Court and for which positive outcome are awaited. Nzano Kikon, General Secretary of the Lotha Eloë Hoho is positive that Lotha women can do well in all fields if given the chance to do so.

## (2) Renchen women Society

This society was formed by a group of progressive thinking Lotha women with the objectives to create social awareness, particularly for uplifting women and the girl child through exhibition, seminars and other related activities. It was formed on 1 may, 2010 purely as a non- profit making organization. Besides others they work to revive, preserve and retain the Lothas rich cultural heritages especially by taking up project to encourage the trade and skill of the loin loom weaving among the present generation. One such project is the publishing of a book entitled “Lotha Naga textiles and patterns (1914-1947)”, where they did a commendable job by trying to disseminate awareness about the ancestral heritage of the Lothas by collecting and documenting the long forgotten patterns, motifs and designs of the Lotha textiles used by the forefathers, and which are no longer used and currently not in knowledge of the present generation.

## 3. Molum Thera welfare society:

Formed on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2000 in Wokha Town, by hard working and progressive housewives, the main aim of the society is to make the women folk aware of the importance and benefit of growing flowers and provide economic upliftment of the womenfolk through

buying and selling of flowers. With this aim in view, the society organizes annual flower shows to help the people inculcate the habit of preserving natural beauty. They also participate actively in social activities concerning the welfare of women and the girl child in the district.

### SOME ILLUSTRIOUS WOMEN OF THE SOCIETY

Some of the Lotha women who rank first among women are given below:

1. Mrs. Akhono Ngullie of Tsungiki village was born in around 1884. She joined Government service in 1920-21 as female Attendant at Wokha Civil Hospital. She was the first Lotha woman to be appointed in the Government service. She retired from the service in 1943 and died in 1959.
2. Mrs. Razouno Wodeno, daughter of Assemo Tungoe was born in 1902 at Kohima. She was one among the first Nagas tutored by Dr. Rivenburg at Kohima. She read upto class 4. She was trained as Nurse from Perry White Medical School, Dibrugarh during the British regime.
3. Mrs. Khonanyimi Tungoe of Wokha village, born in 1904 attended Mission school at Kohima. She worked as apprentice and later as female attendant at the civil Hospital, Kohima. In 1943 she was transferred to Wokha, from where she retired from the service as Dai in 1968.
4. Mrs. Thungchanbeni Merri, daughter of Chonsumo Ngulli of Okotso village studied at the Government High School, Mokokchung and matriculated in 2<sup>nd</sup> Division in 1949 as the first among the Lotha women. She was a lifelong teacher and social worker.
5. Mrs. Renchilo Kinghen, the First Graduate.
6. Mrs. Emi Shitiri, the first to enter the Indian Administrative service (IAS).
7. Mrs. Ajano Humtsoe Perry, the first Ph.D holder (Religion)

8. Mrs. Lucy Murry, first president of the Kyong Eloee Hoho.
9. Mrs. Ethel. O. Lotha, the first NCS.
10. Dr. Priscilla mozhui, first MBBS
11. Mrs. Vonchano Ezung, first Ph.D (Secular).

The Lotha women are hard working and industrious. In fact, it is on these long cherished ideals of hard work, dignity and perseverance that a new age of womanhood is ushering in as an inevitable sequence to modern education. The impact of modern education on them is tremendous. They have started realizing their position and status in the society and explicitly or implicitly started to assert equal status with their counterparts. Though the modern system of education sought to educate the people away from the traditional cultures, the enlightened women realized not to disregard their traditional settings. They continued to be the socializers of the young folks into indigenous tradition and have passed their values on to the next generation. To this end, the Kyong Eloee Hoho and women societies mentioned above focus on the preservation and popularization of the traditional costumes, serving as a platform for the ladies to explore and exploit their talents and skills besides advancing the problems faced by women folk in general. Because of their very hard working nature they have a great contribution in income generation in addition to their role as a carrier and transmitter of their rich culture. They learnt to take the best from the two situations, that is, traditional and modern, and therefore maintained the mechanisms both for adaptation and for encouraging the continuity of traditional cultures in the modern age. It is apt here to conclude by borrowing the words of the 19<sup>th</sup> century American thinker, Brigham Young which has an all-time significance, “ You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman ; you educate a generation”.

## HEALTH

The advancement in medical education as well as opening of hospitals has certainly increased the life span and decreased the mortality rate. The Lothas were naturally prone to many kinds of diseases which could not be cured by herbs and other indigenous medicines which they relied on. In the olden days, the lothas used traditional herbs to treat illness, wounds and injuries. The *Ratsen* played the role of both medicine man and village seer. Believed to have supernatural powers, the *Ratsen* would try to diagnose and cure sickness through divination and sacrifices to the spirits. The people had little sense of hygiene and sanitation, and their living standard was low. There were no modern medical facilities.

With the arrival of the Christian missionaries, medical relief was provided to the tribe. Initially, the missionaries even though they were not medical people provided medical services to the people as part of their humanitarian work. They also sent the Lothas to get medical education. Among the Lothas, Dr. Motsuo Ngulli of Okotso village became the first medical doctor. He studied at the Impur Mission school and the Christian High School, Jorhat from where he matriculated in 1935.(Kikon,1993:44). He went to Dibrugarh Medical College and passed as Licenciante Medical Practitioner (LMP) in 1939. He served with distinction as Medical officer attached to the Allied 'V' Force in the Burma (Myanmar) front during the Second World War in 1943-44. Dr. Motsuo joined the Government service as Medical officer in 1945 and served the people with dedication. Besides, being a pioneer Christian, he helped in the translation of the four gospels into the Lotha language and also translated the Aesop's fables into Lotha.

In 1928, Dr. J. R Bailey, the then American missionary to the Lothas purchased the present Lotha Mission centre Vankhosung with the purpose of establishing a medical college and hospital. On completion of the transaction of the land deal through Sir C.R Pawsey, the

then sub- divisional officer of the British Mokokchung, Dr Bailey went to Calcutta to buy CGI sheets to start the construction works of the proposed Medical College and hospital. But unfortunately, he died in Calcutta due to food poisoning and the mission was not successful. However, the Lotha Churches association kept the vision of Dr. Bailey alive by opening the Christian Medical Centre on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1984 at Vankhosung. (Lotha Churches Association record).

At present with the fast development in education, the Lotha people have now started realizing the importance of medicine. The Table given below shows the availability of modern health and other social facilities in the District.

Figure 4.6 Availability of Social Infrastructure Facilities in Wokha district as of 2013

State/ District	Electrified Villages	Hospitals/ Dispensaries/ CHC/PHC/Sub-Centre/STD Clinic/DTC	Banks	Post office	Police Station and Out- post
Nagaland	1258	576	146	328	89
Wokha	124	54	11	22	07
Percent	9.85	9.37	7.53	6.70	7.86

Source: Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2013

Besides these particulars, National Control Programme launched in the area are Reproductive & Child Health ( RCH), Universal immunization Programme (UIP), Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme( RNTCP) , National Vector Borne Control Programme ( NVBCP), HIV/AIDS, National Leprosy Eradication Programme(NLEP), National Programme for Control of blindness(NPCB), Integrated Diseases Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Iodine Deficiency Diseases Control Programme (NIDDCP), National Programme for prevention & Control of Deafness.

There are also other health programmes like the national Rural Health Mission (NRHM), which was launched in 2006. With its launching there is a marked improvement in ANC registration, Institutional delivery, fully immunized children, awareness and acceptance of family planning methods and overall improvement in health care delivery system. Moreover, in September 2002, Communitization was launched under which Village Health Committees (VHC) were formed in all the villages in order to ensure ownership and improved health care services. Through Communitization, the community is actively participating in the developmental activities of the health units and is aware of health and sanitation activities. In some of the villages, this is evident in their monthly social work of cleaning the health unit compound and the village. (District Human Development Report, Wokha: 2013)

The Lothas living simple lives for centuries together in his natural habitat with little knowledge about the outside world had rocketed its way from a pre- literate past to a modern present within a matter of hardly one hundred and fifty years. Modern Education and the inevitable phenomena of modernization and globalization have drastically changed all aspect of the Lotha life for the better or worse. It can only be concluded by saying that at this juncture the only task now is to ensure that the best of the old does not disappear in the zest for the new. Education and economic prosperity would lose all meaning if the cultural and spiritual foundations of the society are completely forgotten.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY**

When a group of people following a particular kind of religion is introduced to a new religion and a new set of ethics, cultural changes follow. That group of people will have to conform to principles regarded as right and legitimate in the new religion. The Lotha traditional beliefs, values and customs underwent tremendous changes as a result of coming into contact with Christianity. The influence of the American Baptist missionaries was a major catalyst for the metamorphosis in the Lotha society and culture. The impact of the missionaries on the Lothas lay mainly in the sphere of religion, social practices, education, medicine, cleanliness, health and sanitation, building of character and the development of self reliance etc. The changes which were brought by the missionaries were a direct consequence of the nature of the Christian faith they taught. At the same time, their attitude to the traditional culture was greatly responsible for rejecting some elements of culture and for retaining others. The present chapter will attempt to examine the above mentioned areas of impact.

#### **HISTORICAL ANALYSIS**

To understand the extent of the impact of Christianity on the Lothas, it is pertinent to know something about the region's political History. Understanding this aspect will also help to analyze as to whether the cultural impacts would have occurred among the Lothas even without the presence of the missionaries, that is, only through the new administration and the developments brought about by the British rule in the area. Here, one cannot ignore the fact

that with the coming of British rule better communication was introduced, opening up the hitherto isolated Lotha villages. With the opening of the area, outsiders came which led to improvement in the prospect of trade and enhancement in economic livelihood. There was also greater mobility of the people and learning of new ideas. But it can be argued that the deeper and more lasting impact on the life and culture of the Lothas was affected by the Christian missionaries.

Long before the advent of the British, the Nagas had organized themselves under the political systems of their own which had been the natural outcome of their social evolution. Two distinctly different types of system of governance had been evolved – democratic system in the clan- based village societies controlled by the village council, and autocratic system of chieftainship controlled by the village chief. The Lothas, unlike some other Naga tribes like the Semas and Konyaks, evolved a democratic system of governance. Politically, the Lotha region was never ruled by any foreign power nor was never a part of the Indian Empire. In their traditional polity, there was no ruler or chief. Their traditional political system was not institutionalized beyond the village boundaries. Each village was an independent unit in the tribe.

The Lothas governed themselves by a set of unwritten Laws known as the '*Pyimtsu Motsui Shikhu*.(Customary Laws). (Ngullie, 1993:16). These customary laws were strictly enforced by a council formed by the elderly men of the village called '*Tongti Chochang*'. The *Pvuti* (Priest) also occupied important position in the society. However they did not recognized any sovereign power at a higher level. The different villages maintained hostile relations because of the practice of Head hunting. With such a set-up, the Lothas remain in

cultural isolation from the rest of the world for centuries, except for sporadic contact with the plains of Assam for trade purpose. There was no money but goods were bartered.

The geographical isolation of the Lothas was broken by the advent of the British in the Lotha area. As early as 1874, for further extension of political control to both the western and eastern tribes, two survey parties were dispatched “With the set objectives of surveying the areas as much as possible, to explore the resources with a view to ascertain its natural production, to observe the customs, manner and institutions of the tribes, to cultivate friendly relations with the tribes of the interior areas, and to locate a permanent site for the headquarters of the Naga Hills agency”. (Sema,1992:16). British survey officer Captain Butler reached the Lotha area in December 1875. At Pangti village, Butler was taken by surprise by the villagers and was injured. He was removed to Golaghat for treatment but succumbed to his wound after a few days. In retaliation the British Government burnt Pangti village. (Pongener,2011:50). The frequent harassment given by the Lothas bringing about John Butler’s death, compelled the Government to establish a regular administration in Lotha area. Prompt and decisive action was taken on the proposal and Wokha sub- Division of Naga Hills District was started in the year 1876. Wokha was occupied as the district head quarter and buildings for that and a garrison were raised. Roads were built. Contacts with the Lotha Villages were made. Formal announcement about the introduction of administration was made and house tax was enforced. Thus, the modern history of the Lothas started when the Wokha Sub- Division of the Naga Hills District was constituted. (Ghosh, 1979:23)

Modern administration was introduced by the British in the district after the creation of the Sub- Division. The British followed a two- tiered system to administer the districts, viz, the village unit and the district unit. The village units were headed by the Goanburas (G.B), responsible for maintenance of law and order. Besides, the institution of the Do- Bhasi (D.B) was introduced. He was the interpreter or translator. A sub- divisional officer was appointed

to head the sub- divisions and at the apex of the district administration was the Deputy Commissioner. He was responsible to the Governor of Assam, who was the agent to the Governor General of India. (Sema,1992: 128). The same administrative arrangement remained intact throughout the colonial administration of Naga Hills from 1881 to 1947.

Here it may be noted that the British introduced no significant basic changes in the administration of the Nagas. They were mostly left to continue to rule and administer their villages according to their respective customs and tradition. The British were satisfied with the maintenance of law and order, collection of annual house tax and guiding of the general administration of the district at the supervisory level thus leaving the responsibility of the actual day to day administration to the Goanburas.

Frederick. S. Downs hold the British administration as the primary agent of cultural change in the Naga hills, as he opines, “ British anthropologists argues for the preservation of traditional cultures of the tribes , but ironically, the British administration itself had initiated the process of cultural change among the Nagas. ( 1994:128). He identified the components of the intrusions that brought about the changes and challenged the traditional socio- cultural structures as follows; “ The subjection of the tribes to an external political authority for the first time in their history, the introduction of an alien administrative and judicial system that significantly undermined the authority of the traditional system and imposed entirely new principles of authority and jurisprudence; the introduction of a money economy to replace barter and consumer items such as mill cloth and kerosene lanterns, thus undermining the largely self- sufficient economy of the tribal areas; establishment of modern communications, including a postal system, roads and new forms of transport; bringing in a number of outsiders- administrators, clerks, soldiers, merchants, technicians and missionaries- who provided new lifestyle models, particularly in the town areas that grew up around the administrative centers; and the imposition of laws that seriously affected traditional

institution.”. (1994:215). According to Downs, in highly integrated tribal societies, these intrusions created socio- cultural trauma and Christianity provided an adaptive spirit to cope with the drastic changes.

However, Piketo Sema, himself a Naga author avers that “The colonial administration made no significant conscious efforts to introduce western culture in Naga Hills, and its influence on the people remained only at the superficial level without disturbing the cultural current of the Nagas”. (1992:86) The British adopted the system of native administration which would suit local tastes and at the same time be conducive to the maintenance of Law and order among the tribes. In other words, the British did not seek to interfere in the internal affairs of the Nagas nor try to administer them on the European model. Accordingly they reinforced traditional form of administration which well- suited the peculiar conditions of its people and society”. (Sema, 1992:29). The British rule did not in any way seriously affect the basic social structure of the Nagas. It remained traditional in character and content. Almost all the Naga theological writers are agreed with the view of Furer- Haimendorf that ‘ “the more closer and intimate contact with the people which was affected by missionary enterprise- through preaching of the gospel and schooling not only proselytized the Nagas, but also interrupted the flow of their indigenous culture as well”. (1936: 46).

The British administration in the Naga Hills followed non- intervention policy. As the above discussion reveals, they did not attempt to change the culture of the Nagas, rather they wanted continuity in their culture. The purpose for such approach was perhaps the modernistic concept of evolution. The British considered the Naga Culture as “Primitive” or “Savage”. They came with the colonialist concept of the “White man’s burden” to civilize these primitive tribes. However, they wanted to bring about this through “Evolution” rather than “Revolution”. For the British, the Nagas were “primitive” and “uncivilized”, and their mission

was to civilize them. They saw the changes taking place and wanted to slow the process in order to prevent an abrupt cultural dislocation. (Lotha, 2007:44). As far as the British were concerned, if the “primitive” and “savage” Nagas were to be of any use to them, they had to be civilized first. In this attempt, they brought Christian missions and the schools. Abraham Lotha articulates, “What the British didn’t realize was that by introducing Christianity they unleashed a force that would not only counter their efforts to preserve a “pristine” Naga culture but also expedite a radical change in the Naga society. Christian missionaries followed the policy of civilization by revolution. Everything Naga was considered heathen and was condemned and the missionaries instilled in the converts a negative attitude towards Naga culture”. (2007:46).

It was the coming of missionaries which made the change revolutionary. Every aspect of the people’s life had been touched by change- social, cultural and religion. A number of advantages also came with Christianity. As this religion came along with education, the life of the people had been uplifted to the present standard. With the advent of Christianity and western education, transformation in social life became inevitable. The converts abandoned their former religious rites, beliefs and rituals, accepting Christian teachings and Christian ways and collaborations.

The impact of Christianity on the Lothas should be seen as a whole rather than in denominational segments. However, it cannot be ignored that it was the American Baptist who made a lasting impact on the Lothas because even after the departure of the British and the coming of other denominations to their area, the Lothas seems to have remained uninfluenced and are predominantly Baptist Christians even today. The KBES records that by 2012, 95% of the Lothas are Christians out of which 85% are Baptists. (NBCC Platinum jubilee, 2012:93). The American Baptist missionaries made their impact through evangelistic work, education and medical relief work. All these factors in turn led to change in lifestyle.

Education and development of their language and literature also provided to the Lothas a sense of identity. In the process of carrying out the above said works, they also left a deep impact on the folk lore and culture of the Lothas. To these aspects of impact I will now turn.

## EDUCATION

Education ranks as the most important contribution of the Christian missionaries to the Lothas. Socio- cultural transformation among the people could not take place without education. A new outlook on the world can come about only through literacy and through the contact with the outside world that schools can provide. The educational institutions served as places where new generations could master the skills needed in order to cope with the new demands and new situation created after the opening up of the area through new administration. The initial object of imparting education was to promote proselytization among the heathen tribe but the process had resulted in opening to the hitherto secluded Lothas all the wide horizons of knowledge through education. Christian missionaries introduced school education on the understanding that unless the local people knew the basic art of reading and writing, the proclamation of the gospel would not have produced effective results. Thus education was started as a means for evangelization.

The Lotha oral tradition says that they had a script written on dried animal skin which was carried by their forefathers during migration. Written on such skin it was convenient enough for the purpose of rolling. But as this script was not kept under proper custody, time came when it was eaten by a dog. (Ghosh, 1979:31). Myths, notwithstanding, the credit goes to the missionaries who introduced the Roman alphabet and phonetic adjustments made to suit the Lotha language. With the birth of a script to the language, the foundation for education of the Lothas was laid. The process of education of the Lothas was thus a direct contribution of

the missionaries. The Rev. Dr. Witter who initiated the process of the Lotha education can rightly be considered as the father of Lotha education. It was he who brought a script to the language and whose vision and policies began the process of formal education among the Lothas. The many initial problems confronting the missionaries in the field of education were met and overcome with tact and perseverance. There was formidable opposition from the Lotha animists when it became evident that the missionary teaching was adversely influencing the students and eroded the Lotha traditional values. However with their demonstrated dedication and gospel of love, the missionary education attracted the people gradually. It resulted in inculcating discipline, self- reliance and cleanliness. Education also promoted building of personality and leadership in every sphere of the Lotha society- religious, political and professional. Education has enabled the Lothas to know more about others as well as themselves.

Education imparted by the missionaries had its impacts on the status of women and children too. For the children, education was a major breakthrough from the ill clad and unhygienic lives their earlier generation led. The children were better looked after in the areas where schools have been run. Children became more independent, ambitious and well-mannered too. The Christian women, who received education and skill developing trainings under the Christian missionaries, began to supplement their incomes by means of small trade such as stitching, knitting, tailoring, basket weaving etc.,. These women had greater air of dignity and self- respect about them than the non- Christian women. In 1951, Mrs. Houston started a women training school at Vankhosung Mission Center. This school was opened with the objective of teaching the bible, songs, and also to develop leadership. The Lotha women were taught not only how to read and write but also skills such as sewing, knitting and tailoring. It was an opportunity given to the women to uplift their social and economic life in the family, as also in the society. They began to nurture new ideas about pattern of childcare



and house-keeping. With increase in the number of educated women and new occupation, there came ideational independence for women too. An attitude towards domesticity as a virtue came about when less attention was placed on agriculture and more on the education of children. Women and children were taught to cook, clean, and minimize the use of water while achieving maximum cleanliness. The Lothas have been slow to send their girls to mission hospitals for nurses training. However with the initiation of the Houstons, the first Lotha girl was sent to Jorhat and another in Kohima.

Thus, education brought about advancement and order that resulted in a reworking of the perception of 'hygiene' and 'health' among the Lothas. Through education, cleanliness and health care improved considerably. Through the mission schools, a group of intelligentsia emerged among the Lothas who in turn contributed much to the social upliftment of the tribe. Besides, concepts like nation, sovereignty and independence became popular among the tribe. No education is worth the name which does not inculcate the qualities necessary for living graciously, harmoniously and efficiently with one's fellow men. Amongst the qualities gained through the modern education given by the missionaries by the Lothas are discipline, co-operation, social sensitiveness and tolerance. All these had in turn played a special part in the humanizing and socializing of the people's personality.

A great debt is owed to the pioneering efforts of Dr and Mrs Witter who started the tradition of blending mission and school. They left behind a tradition which was followed by the local churches, making academic education as one of the hallmarks of the Churches. Many of the Lotha churches are now attached with schools.

## LITERATURE

The American Baptists missionaries contributed to the development of Lotha literature. Dr. Witter was the first to reduce the Lotha language to writing. In 1888, Dr. Witter prepared the Lotha primer and a phrase book. In the same year the “An outline Grammar of the Lotha Naga Language with vocabulary and illustrative sentences” was printed in Calcutta. (Murry, 2003:24). Dr. Witter also translated nine hymns and the first catechism, excluding the Lord’s prayer into the Lotha language. The translation of the New Testament also started.

Besides Dr. Witter, other missionaries also helped in the development of literature in the Lotha language. The Rev. S. A Perrine completed the Lotha Primer, Arithmetic, English-Lotha vocabulary and gospel of Mathew in Lotha by 1905. By 1927, Rev. Longwell reported the completion of the gospel of Mark and a hymn book with 115 hymns. (Murry, ed 1979:76). Local converts helped in the translation works. Shanjamo, the first Naga to visit the USA in 1905 was well versed in English, Assamese and Ao besides his mother tongue. He translated several gospel literatures and contributed in the preparation of the ‘outline grammar’ of the Lotha dialect. Chumdemo and Ashio helped in the preparation of the first edition of the New Testament which was printed in 1946. In 1950, 300 copies of the New Testament were reprinted by Mrs. Houston. The hymnal was also revised and reprinted by Mrs Houston in 1951. During the time of Rev. Tanquist, the four gospels of Mathew, mark, Luke and John was edited and 3000 copies printed in 1953.

The missionaries provided theological education and training to Local people so that they could assume leadership and evangelical works themselves. After the departure of the Houstons, the Lothas themselves carried on efficiently the task of evangelization of the Lothas, so also in the development of Lotha literature. The educated Lothas organized the Lotha language and Literature committee. It concerns itself for the development of the

language and for that mainly devoted itself to the translation of the religious scriptures. Other short stories from the Bible were also translated. Mr. Tssidenshio Tsanglao, the first graduate in Theology from the Lotha tribe took up the task of translation of the Old Testament. The entire New Testament was translated by Rev. Ellis Murry. In 1968, the Lotha Bible consisting of both the Old and New Testaments was brought out. In 1967, at the request of the Lotha Churches Association, Dr. L. M. Murry prepared a hymnal containing about 300 hymns. Mr. N. L. Kinghen, Rev. Merithung Mozhui and Rev. Ahamo Patton contributed a lot in the development of literature of the Lothas.

It may be noted that the first educated Lothas who did pioneering works towards the awakening of the tribe through education were Christian converts or whose parents were the earliest converts. Dr. Motsuo of Okotso Village was the son of the Rilumo Ngulli, one of the first Christian converts among the Lothas. He was the first Matriculate and Doctor among the Lothas. He helped in the translation of four Gospels into Lotha. He also translated the Aesop's Fables into Lotha. (Kikon, 1993:44). By giving a script to a hitherto unwritten language had brought about development of literature, which in turn united the people through a common language. This created greater unity and solidarity among them. Thus education and literature widened the world view of the Lothas, and T. Kikon, called this period from the 1880s to 1950 as the "Age of awakening" among the Lothas.

## LIFE STYLE

The American Baptist Missionaries belong to the protestant puritan evangelicalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which emphasized on Christianity as a life style. They focused on transformed life for salvation. Certain standard of conduct was expected to be maintained to become Christians, and the converts themselves understood Christianity as a different way of

life. Areas in which 'Christian' standards affected life- style included such things as opposition to the use of intoxicants, stress upon hygienic living conditions, advocacy of a more prominent and dignified role for women, and opposition to intra- tribal warfare and head hunting and the various institutions such as Morung that supported these practices. (Downs, 1994:148).

There was an improvement in the very appearance of the Lothas who came under the influence of Christianity. John Wesley's maxim, cleanliness as a virtue next to Godliness was adopted by the Christian converts, not to suggest that one was ungodly if unclean, but that those who were seen as 'neat' and 'tidy' were also seen to be polite, responsible and orderly and, in a very generalized way, to be associated with godliness. Lack of sanitation and unhygienic living conditions naturally caused diseases and illness, which the people then attributed to an evil spirit troubling them. The idea of care for healthy living was inculcated which gave their society a sense of order. In cleaning dirt, an attempt is being made to control the environment positively. For instance, by keeping the utensils, home and surrounding clean and using clean, boiled water to keep diseases off, the new system is seen as orderly, an elevation of personal and collective hygiene and therefore 'advancement' from the previous life of disease and disorder. The Christian missionaries taught the Lothas inexpensive method of personal hygiene through regular bath, keeping one self clean, wearing washed and pressed clothes, especially on Sunday church services. Rinsing of mouth was occasional, neither was the body cleaned by bathing, the hair combed or washed, nor were the nails trimmed regularly. The missionaries taught cleanliness of person and surrounding. They were also taught to boil and disinfect drinking water. Their dress also underwent a change. The indigenous costumes were gradually replaced by western clothing which perhaps was more practical.

The Rev and Mrs. Houston were the next full time missionaries assigned to the Lothas after the Dr and Mrs Witter left. They lived with the lothas for five years between 1947- 53. They made the following observation about the diet of the Lothas: “The Lothas can’t remember a time when the rains failed. Their fields are fruitful giving them rice, corn, millet and vegetables and fruits the year around, oranges, pineapples, bananas, mustard leaves, potatoes, beans, pumpkins, tomatoes, garlic and onions as well as other vegetables. From the jungle they get wild fruits, berries, nuts, edible leaves and roots. When there are no fresh vegetables they have their sour bamboo shoots and ‘stinking’ lentils along with dried fish and meat. They have their own cows, pigs, chickens, goats and often shoot or trap wild animals and birds. But although they have all this they still suffer from many sicknesses because the rice is only half cooked, the curry is filled with red hot chillies, the dishes and cooking utensils are not washed properly, un boiled water is poured into the tea and the pigs and chickens are right at home around the open fire in the dark windowless kitchens”. (1987:15).

The importance of a healthy diet was explained and inculcated to the Lothas by the Christian missionaries. Eggs and fowls which were used for the purpose of sacrifices, now were saved for eating. Milk was introduced as a nutritious item of food. The Lotha agriculturists usually take two to three meals a day. Nothing was taken in between except rice beer. There was less drinking of water. The missionaries introduced tea. The missionaries explained the importance of tending vegetable carefully, using manure. Meals were normally eaten with finger. The missionaries not only taught the Lothas to eat with clean fingers but also the use of cutlery and crockery to some of the educated employed and well to do Christians. Importance of cleanliness and sanitation for health was taught to them. Mrs Harriet Houston constantly emphasized it as she taught the women. In the women’ training school held annually, basic lesson in cleanliness, home nursing and child care was given to the Lotha

girls. Harriet later observed that “The Christians are definitely cleaner and healthier than the non Christians”.

Another contribution made by Christianity to the Lotha life- style was in providing a new peaceful relationship among the different villages. As noted earlier, head hunting and warfare was a way of life for the Lothas before the British administration put a ban on it. With the gospel of the good news a new relationship based on love and friendship rather than hostility and warfare was inculcated. Downs noted that “It was essential that a new ideology replaced the old if social disintegration were not to take place. The Christian emphasis upon love for neighbors and enemy alike provided that new ideology”. (1994: 151). Thus, the spread of Christianity and the enlightenment arising out of education gave men a moral outlook with which the old philosophy of life- for- life was incompatible. The practice of head hunting thus died down a natural death.

Among the Lothas the beginning of Christianity in new villages was made due to the works of converts from other villages rather than the foreign missionaries. Rev. Ibonsao, Shanjamo etc were the pioneer Lotha evangelists who went preaching from village to village making first converts in the new villages. The churches and later the Lotha Churches Association played a significant role in establishing fellowship and good will among the hitherto hostile Lotha villages. The absence of any organization, political or otherwise to embrace the whole tribe is already noted. It was the annual meeting of the Associations and the church fellowship which brought together for the first time the representatives and converts of the different Lotha villages. These fostered openness to others and affected their life- style. At present there are 121 villages under the umbrella of the Lotha Baptist churches association (KBES).

Christianity also brought to the Lothas the idea of humanism or in other words new value judgment concerning the worth of the people around them. The Lotha traditional life was guided by superstition and taboos. For instance, they considered people dying of unnatural death as the malice of the evil spirits, and therefore taboo to touch the corpse lest they will be afflicted with nmyok (evil fate). But now with the teachings of Christian love and concern for fellow beings, the converts adopted a new attitude or sense of responsibility towards other people. Therefore, we can say that Christianity liberated the Lothas from their superstitions and fear. They came to understand that the rites and rituals, the superstitions and taboos of the animistic religion were not effective in keeping them from the fear of the malevolent spirits. Christianity and Christ's power is seen to be greater than the spirits. In other words, the Christian teachings replaced animism. Therefore Christianity not only provided a new material life- style but also gave to the Lothas an adaptive spirit amidst drastic changes ushered through modernization.

## MEDICINE

In the traditional tribal world view, religion and illness were inseparable. Illness was due to the displeasure of the spirits. Illness was a religious problem, not a purely physical or scientific one, and much religious practices had been directed towards appeasing the spirits that causes illness. When it became evident that the treatment offered by the missionaries was not only much cheaper than the traditional sacrifices but more effective, the people took it to mean that the religious power of the missionaries was greater than that of the traditional priests. The missionaries began to give simple medical treatment even though they had no formal qualification. The early missionaries were not trained, but gradually pick up a little knowledge of first aid and simple treatment of the most prevalent diseases. The medical

services thus constituted a practical demonstration of the meaning of Christian universalism. The service was provided to all. Moreover, local Christians were encouraged to transcend their traditional narrow loyalties in services to others. In this way, a pagan who does not care for a stranger has concern for his clan and relatives. Seeing better results of modern medicine made them to give up their old method of performing rites in times of sickness. In this way, medical missions had significant influence upon their traditional worldview and superstitions.

Dr. Clark had foreseen the great utility of medical work in furthering the missionary cause, and accordingly he made a special request for a qualified medical missionary. In response, Dr. S. W. Rivenburg came to Molung in 1885, and later shifted to Kohima where medical relief works were carried on side by side with evangelism. The first full-time medical missionary among the Lothas was Dr. Bailey. He was in fact instrumental in the opening of the Christian Medical Centre at Vankhosung for the Lothas. In 1928, Dr. J. R. Bailey purchased the present Kyong (Lotha) Baptist Churches Association (KBES) Mission Centre Vankhosung with the purpose of establishing a Medical College and Hospital. On completion of the land deal, he went to Calcutta (Kolkata) to purchase CGI sheet to start the construction works of the proposed Hospital. But unfortunately he died in Calcutta due to food poisoning. However, the Lotha Baptist Association kept the vision of Dr. Bailey alive, and with funds donated by the Churches the Christian Medical Centre was established on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1984 as a maiden project of the Kyong (Lotha) Baptist Churches Association.(KBES). (KBES record).

Inspired by the humanitarian approach of the American missionaries the Lotha Association also developed a wider objective of deliver primary healthcare to the remote villages through the network of Churches. This inspiration is an important legacy of the American Baptist missionaries on the Lothas. With the support of the people, in cash and kind, and the Lotha Churches, the Christian Medical centre is still functioning. As mentioned



in the objective, the Hospital continue to provide community healthcare services to all the remote villages through an established Rural Mobile Unit comprising of qualified and expert medical team. This Unit is responsible for taking the healthcare system to the rural areas through the network of Churches under the KBES. For the purpose of implementing this program, Rural Health Centres are attached with all the Churches. The Community Health Promoters (CHP) who are trained in this Medical Centre are assigned the dual task of healthcare provider as well as coordinator to the Rural Mobile Unit Team. The infant mortality rate is alarming in the rural areas. Therefore, emphasize is laid on the immunization of all kinds including Ante and Post Natal care to the rural populace both in the Hospital and through the Community Health Promoters. Thus healthcare system is delivered to the poor and needy people in the remote villages.

Help given to the villagers in the form of medicines was greatly appreciated and it went a long way towards winning their confidence. As Howard and Harriet Houston wrote, “The back door dispensary opened many opportunities to witness for Christ to the non-Christians and it was a good way to build good will”. ( 1987:13). Through the medical relief works, the missionaries won the confidence of the Lothas. The Houstons remembered, “One of the men had broken his arm and his friends had brought him to us for American medicine. It was difficult to persuade him to go on to the government hospital at Wokha to have his arm set because he believed American medicine rubbed on his broken arm would heal it. Although we told the Lothas we were not medical people, still they came to us for help. Everyday Harriet had a “back door dispensary”. They came with everything: cracked callouses on the feet, horrible Naga sore, itch, cuts, wounds, goiters, ulcers, measles and it was wonderful to see how many were helped- some with the miracle drugs and others with soda mint”. (1987:13). Here, back door meant that the missionaries were not medical doctors but preachers of the good news, and through the practical demonstration of their love and concern

of the people to whom they came to preach the good news, the missionaries had clearly build good will and confidence of the Lothas.

Though the function of the medical mission was primarily physical, yet it had evangelistic aims also. It was the door of approach and often an effective door of approach to the hearts of the patient. Mrs. Harriet Houston recalled “An old lady came to us with a breast cancer and Harriet suggested she go to the mission hospital for treatment. But it was over 100 miles away and the old lady had neither strength nor money to get there. Harriet witnessed to her of the love of Christ for her and she said ‘oh Etsi Elo, I believe in you’. Harriet carefully told her we could not save her but we were there to point her to Christ who could”.( 1987:15). The relief of suffering was, therefore, regarded as the duty first hand, but the effort to convert the patients was also not neglected. The medical work of the American protestant missionaries was, therefore, one of the most commendable aspects of their activity. It broke down prejudice and dissipated opposition. The missionaries endeared themselves to the people where they worked. The work of evangelism was aided and Christian principles were disseminated through medical institutions. (Pathak, 1967: 195).

## IDENTITY

Before the establishment of British rule in the region, tribal identity was weak in the sense that there was absence of an organization or body which brought together all the villages of the tribe, either for religious or political purpose. There was no organization embracing the whole tribe. As described earlier, each Lotha village was a state in itself. Head hunting and warfare was the order of the day. Therefore, the villages remained in constant hostility toward each other. Frederick .S. Downs has identified four ways in which Christianity has contributed to strengthening a sense of tribal identity in the North East India -

through the creation of a standard language, through its educational work, through its ideology and through its ecclesiastical structures. (1994: PP 206,207). We can discuss in this lines because what is true for the North East region is true for the Lothas too.

When the missionaries arrived at the Lotha area, they did not have a written form of language. The first task of Dr. Witter, the first missionary to the lothas, on arrival was to reduce the language to writing. The object of the missionaries in doing this was evangelization. But it resulted in the creation of a standard language which led to the development of literature in the local language. With the growth of literacy and establishment of schools, the people became conscious of their identity as one people, and also their rights and privileges under an alien rule.

Education widened the mental as well as geographical horizon of the Lothas. The educated ones for the first time came into contact with members from other villages within the same tribe as well as outside with whom, previously they had no contact. The first of these people were the Local converts who later as evangelists began to visit other villages preaching the gospel. Thus Christianity paved the way for the people to come out of their isolation and widened their social interaction and made them aware of their cultural identity. Christianity became the strongest integrating force in their society.

The converts were organized into local churches. In the Lotha area, the first church was established at Okotso village in 1904. By 1922 the Lotha churches was multiplied to 12 churches necessitating the formation of the Lotha Baptist Churches Association. Previously these churches were under the Ao Association, but in 1923 the Kyong Baptist Ekhumkho Sanrhyutsu KBES (The Lotha Baptist churches Association) was formed. From that year onwards meetings were held annually. These church organization or Association was the first to bring together representatives of the whole tribe. It significantly contributed to the strengthening of tribal identity. KBES brought together persons and representatives from the

entire tribe for annual meetings, fellowship and common aspirations. Though its objective was religious, it helped in unifying the tribe.

Politically oriented organization like the Tribal Council Bench and the Lotha Hoho were developed later by the educated Lothas, but the tribal level church organization ie, Kyong Baptist Ekhumkho Sanrhyutsu KBES (The Lotha Baptist Churches Association), provided a much larger and more comprehensive experience of the reality of the unity of the tribe. The women and youth fellowships also brought the people together.

The most important element in Christian ideology was its universalism. The traditional tribal religions had generally been perceived to be relevant mainly to the village or small group of villages. Christianity was proclaimed as relevant to the whole tribe, indeed to all humankind. This universalism was re-enforced by an emphasis on the Christian responsibility for evangelism and service even to members of the tribe who were hostile to them. In fact, the first persons to establish significant positive contacts among villages traditionally hostile towards each other were Christian evangelists, some employed by the missions or by churches but most being volunteers. They were in a very real sense the first agents of tribal solidarity. (Downs, 1994: 34). To this reality expounded by F. S. Downs as tribal ecumenism, Renthly Keitzer adds, "A new consciousness of identity was born in Christ as one people". (1995:5).

## FOLK LORE

The term 'folk-lore' applies to unwritten orally transmitted folk-literature of a people. It includes legends, myths, stories, songs, proverbs, wise sayings and lore, patterns of festivals and dances, superstitions and magical formulas. The term was coined by William J. Thomas (1803- 1885) in 1846 to denote either the above mentioned collected materials or the systematic scientific analysis of the materials collected. (Kumar, 1995: 27).

The Lothas are rich in their folk-lore. They had their own ways of recording, narrating and passing on their history. These were largely done through stories. Every village had a body of tradition which narrated the origin of the clans, the doings of their ancestors and the feasts some of their prominent ancestors hosted etc. while some of the stories were purely local interest some were common to the tribe as a whole. Many stories were narrated during festive occasions when the whole villagers come together. In the absence of written documents, folk tales and oral traditions remain the sole links between the past and the present. Unfortunately, with the missionaries contempt of the animistic practices and folk-lore, vast treasure is on the verge of vanishing with the passing away of the old generation. The Lotha folk-lore was rooted in their culture and tradition and acculturation has brought a setback for the same. The decline of the *Chumpo* (morung) which used to be the vital centre around which the Lotha Folk lore flourished has adversely affected the Lotha Folk lore.

Very few of the missionaries, and none who worked with the Lothas, made any systematic study of the culture and tradition of the people they had come to evangelize. This was, in part, due to the ethos out of which they had come in America, and partly because of the nature of their training. They came out of the 19<sup>th</sup> century evangelicalism which was strongly oriented towards bringing about conditions favorable to the establishment of the kingdom of God through social change. They were therefore more interested in changing society than in preserving it. (Roy, 2004:30). With the Lothas, they were more interested in what the people should become than what they had been, more geared towards change rather than looking for elements of continuity with the past.

Their aim was to gain converts who, with education and training in the gospel would become agents of social change. Those who were first converted to Christianity were those who received education and in fact they were the ones who brought great changes in the

socio- cultural and economic life of the Lothas. Because of these reasons, perhaps, none of the foreign missionaries consider it necessary to study the traditional culture in great depth. This change oriented Christianity of the puritan missionaries was most evident in their educational activities. Christianity and education became inseparable. Though Christianity is not per se modernity, the process of modernization was begun by the Christian missionaries with education as the main agency. Moreover, since modernization is born in the west, and the west brought modernization to the Lothas through evangelism and education and new administration, they are the two sides of the same coin.

No doubt the introduction of western music is another important contribution of the missionaries. Music was set in the western tunes and Christian hymns were translated to the Lotha language which was sung in the church services and gatherings. On this music as the base, Lotha music had greatly enriched itself over the years. But, western music resulted in the decline of the traditional folk music. Talking about the decline of the traditional songs and dances, Professor Takatemjen wrote that “Denouncing tribal music and dance as devilish and animistic has done more harm than good. Today hardly any Naga born into Christian home knows Naga Folk music well. It is true that Christian hymns have replaced the Naga music to a certain extent, but it has failed to replace the traditional music which was a natural expression related to real life experience. The Nagas have now embraced the western form of music and yet the fact remains that music too is a vital part of a people’s identity, and it cannot be replaced without damage to the individual and to the society. Dance should be reintroduced as a sort of game for the young and original Naga music should be created so that Christ may be more meaningfully expressed in the culture of the people.” (1990:16). In the same note Abraham Lotha laments, “ask any Naga kid to sing an original Naga song and you will know what I mean. They will know the latest chartbusters of western music but it is highly improbable that they will know any Naga folk song”. (2013:81).

## RELIGION AND CULTURE

At the outset it need mention that positive attitude to one's own and other's culture are not mutually opposed concepts and , therefore, both can be developed simultaneously and it is always advisable to do so. The positive attitude towards one's own culture should precede the positive attitude towards other culture and the former should always form the basis for the latter. The problem arises only when one is stressed at the cost of the other, when one's love for his culture is tanned by his distaste for other's culture which often is the case everywhere.(kundu,1994: 166,167).

In the early years, the missionaries had an ambivalent attitude towards the Naga indigenous culture. Their dedication to the people was also blended with a strongly critical view of the traditional religion and the various cultural practices with conscious or unconscious feelings of superiority in their relation with the heathen. The American Baptist missionaries were products of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when the western nations were vigorously expanding on the globe and western imperialism was in its prime. The feeling of cultural superiority was a by- product of the political supremacy and economic prosperity enjoyed by the western nations which reflected itself in missionary attitude as well. (Pathak,1967: 77). Dr. Fleming, himself a missionary wrote in his book "Whither Bound in Missions", "It was in this earlier atmosphere of racial and cultural superiority that modern missions took their rise. It would be surprising, therefore, if the feeling of superiority, so general in the west, had not been reflected in certain missionary attitude. Here and there, it crept into the literature of early missions, taking it for granted that just as the west had only worthy culture, so their religion was the only faith embodying any truth".( 1925: 03). In most

of the reports of the early missionaries, this superiority attitude is reflected by using words like ‘savage’ ‘heathen’ and so on.

The prevalent theology of the period also served to strengthen this attitude among missionaries. It was ardently believed by Christian theologians of this period that those who had not heard the message of Christ and accepted him as their saviour were eternally damned. (Williams, 1941: 60). The missionaries, therefore, sincerely believed that by propagating the Gospel, they were saving the heathen from eternal damnation and thereby, fulfilling a sublime spiritual mission.

From 1870s onwards, a remarkable change came over American protestant thought. This was the regeneration of the individual to that of society through the Christian gospel. In the earlier period the emphasis had been on the salvation of the individual. But by the 1880s, the idea that not only the individual but all of society should be recreated through Christian love and benevolence found concrete expression in American protestant thought. It was emphasized that the teachings of Jesus had a message not only for the individual, but for his whole environment- social, moral and economic. (Pathak, 1967: 93). The increased emphasis on the social aspects of Christianity had its origin in the thinking and activities of the Liberal Theologians of this period. It came to be called the “social Gospel” and is regarded as America’s unique contribution to the great ongoing stream of Christianity. Now the aim of the foreign missionary work was not only the salvation of the individual non- Christian, but the regeneration of society and the Christianization of the whole social order. In short, the aim of the foreign mission was to elevate human society, modify traditional evils and introduce ideals of reform.

Armed with these prevailing ideologies of the age, the American Baptist missionaries came to the Lothas and began the efforts of civilizing and evangelizing the tribe. But we



cannot conclude that Christianity which came along with western culture is good in all aspects of the life of the people. There were certain negative concepts and practices which were a by-product of the new religion. As a result of a western cultured religion, the pattern of thinking and mode of life of the people are being to a great extent westernized. The people, especially the young were began to dislike many of their cultural elements like songs, festivals and dresses etc. Furer- Haimendorf avers, "All the teachings the Mission provides point to a wider, and in the eyes of the young convert, a more desirable world. Seeing his own customs condemned by the missionaries, he learns to despise his own tribe and cultural inheritance". (1946:54).

In the process of evangelization, the entire cultural set up of the tribe was affected, for among the Lothas religion is so interwined with their everyday life that distinction cannot be made between the sacred and secular. Every dimension of their life is linked with the invisible world of the spirits. As V. K. Nuh expresses, "Culture pervades every aspect of the life of its members. Their food habits, dress, manners, behavior and customs, their concept of time, space and reality are culturally patterned. Tribal religion is a belief expressed culturally. Tribal religion and culture are two faces of the same coin". (Nuh, 2001: 25 ). British administrators and most of the anthropological writers are agreed that the Christian ban on cultural practices has adversely affected many aspects of the Naga Culture. They pointed out particularly the strict imposition of teetotalism, ban of the Morung life and cultural feasts and festivals.

Traditional religion and the rituals and ceremonies associated with it were condemned as heathen practices by the missionaries, leading to the complete extinction of these practices. "They rejected anything in the traditional culture that they judged to be religious or superstitious. Animal sacrifices and rituals intended to propitiate the spirits were prohibited. There was also a certain suspicion of anything that departed from the rather sober evangelical

understanding of appropriate Christian conduct. Even too much merry making, though innocent of all religious or immoral connotations was suspect. They believe that the life style of Christians and non- Christians should be clearly apparent”( Downs, 1972:189). Therefore, all heathen festivals and feasts were to be forbidden. One such practice was the *Osho* (feast of merit) which fulfilled an extremely important socio- religious and economic function in the Lotha society. The Lothas are by nature fond of feasting. For every achievement like good harvest or successful raids they arrange feasts and celebrate the occasion. The celebration of any festival was considered as incomplete without a sumptuous meal. Thus, feasting of the whole community and a feast given by an individual family for the whole village were an important part of the traditional way of life, the means whereby sharing was practiced and friendship was maintained. (Pongener, 2011: 57). The performance of the *Osho* is the hallmark of social distinction for a Lotha. There are a series of feasts, each one costlier than the preceding one. Each series necessitates the expenditure of large quantities of food- stuffs. For among the Lothas, a man did not gain social prestige by merely possessing wealth, but only by spending it for the benefit of others. Every feast entitles the host to social distinction and increases progressively his standing and position in the community. It also entitles him to wear special dresses and ornament and decorate his house in a particular manner, marking him out from others in the village. (Singh, 1972: 73).

This practice was prohibited by the Christian missionaries and the British administrators for several reasons. The British government saw the celebration of the feast of merit as a motivating factor for headhunting raids (Pongener,2011:58) because of the system of dancing around the *Menkitong* (the head tree of the villages where heads of enemies are hung) during celebration. Another reason was the extravagant expenses involved in hosting the feast. The British government saw that hosting of the feasts involved a huge waste of essential resources and thus they discouraged its observance. The missionaries also, on their

part objected to the feast of merit presumably because the animals consumed in their course are not just slaughtered but sacrificed with appropriate invocations of the spirits. (Furer-Haimendorf, 1946:52-53). The practice also contradicts with the missionaries' rigid enforcement of teetotalism, for the feasts involved much drinking of *soko* (rice beer) and merry-making. Abraham Lotha writes, "Even though the primary objective of the missionaries was to preach the gospel and win souls, in practice, conversion to Christianity also meant conversion to modernity and western morality, particularly American protestant puritan morality in the case of the Nagas, thus calling for a cultural transformation." (2013: 86). Thus, with the coming of Christianity and onset of modernity, the practice of *Osho* no longer exists in the Lotha society today in its original form.

Modern Naga writers are agreed that the prohibition of the feasts and festivals, rituals and ceremonies broke the community spirit. The fundamental concern of the Lotha religion with the well being of the community, are expressed through the rites and rituals, feasts and festivals. Furer-Haimendorf opines, "with the community spirit broken, individualism begin to assert itself, and the western idea of pride in the possession of goods, fostered quite unconsciously by the missionaries, replaced the Naga traditional pride in the lavish expenditure of his wealth". (1946:52-53). The practice of giving feasts provided the Lothas with the incentive to work hard in order to feed the community. But, the abolition of this practice the Lothas began to hoard their wealth and later sell it for profit. The very notion of capitalism in the villages was initiated for the first time by the missionaries.

To the Christian faith was added another factor- formal education which was directly responsible for the disintegration of the Lotha Tradition learning institution, the *Chumpo*. (Morung or Bachelors' dormitory). The Lotha *Chumpo* fulfilled a variety of functions. It served as a guardhouse to warn the villagers in times of war. It was a place where human and animal skulls were kept as relics. It was a meeting place where important decisions relating to

war or peace were taken. It was here that the young boys hear stories and legends told by the old men. The folk songs and tales were handed down from one generation to the other in the *chumpo*. It was also a recreational club for the youth. The members of the *chumpo* were organized into age groups and assigned various works. The boys by performing the duties assigned to them developed a sense of discipline and duty towards his seniors and the community as a whole. An increase in the school enrolment was followed by a decrease in the *chumpo* membership. Soon it was a dying institution and the Lothas lost an important disciplinary institution.

With the decline of the *chumpo* and the feasts and festivals, the Lotha folk lore declined as mentioned earlier. Home industries such as weaving was also affected because the converts now did not require the colorful and richly embroidered traditional shawls because of its association with the traditional religion and culture. For instance, the performance of the *Osho* (Feast of merit) entitles a Lotha to wear a certain shawl called *Phanrubsu* and *Longpensu*. Headhunting, feasts and festival celebrations required the people to don their traditional ornaments and clothes. With Christianity, these cherished possessions like ivory armlets, cowrie beads, head dress and artistically woven shawls were discarded. Beautiful wood carvings which adorned the *Chumpo* also declined. Folk tales, music and dances were forgotten.

The strict enforcement of teetotalism also affected the feasts and festivals because for a Lotha a celebration is incomplete without the *Soko* (rice beer). The Lotha use the term *sho* for drink. There are *Liri sho* which means drinks prepared for harvest, *Yan sho* is drinks prepared for the whole village, *Yinga sho* is the drinks prepared for the age group working company and lichen sho, the drinks prepared sowing seed ritual. The Lotha *Osho* is also the occasion where the whole community is invited to partake in drinking *Soko* (rice beer). (Ngullie, 1994:36-37). Therefore, prohibiting the drinking of rice beer was the main obstacle

to any participation of Christians in village feasts. The custom of eating and drinking together perpetuate community bonding and unity. Moreover, it was a daily part of the diet of the Lothas which refreshes them during hard working days at the Jhum fields. J.P Mills writes, “To deprive a Lotha of his Madhu (Soko) would be like depriving a British workman of both his beer and tea”.(1922:78). Wearing western dress and not drinking rice beer became the markers of becoming Christian. The Lotha Christians were differentiated as ‘*Dhorum ekhi*’ (people who have accepted religion) and those who have not converted were called *Soko eyui*, (drinkers of rice beer). So the Lothas who are still persisting in the old religion are identified as “*Soko eyui*” even if they have stopped brewing and drinking *Soko* (rice beer) these days.

But one cannot make negative generalization about the missionary attitude towards the traditional cultures. The American Baptist missionaries had prohibited the traditional feasts and festivals and the activities of the *Chumpo* (Morung) because of their association with the old animistic religion, the sacrifice of animals and the excessive drinking and merry making involved. Most of the feasts and celebrations were also associated with head hunting. According to them, many of the songs and dances were supposed to encourage promiscuity or to celebrate war and headhunting which were immoral by Christian standards. M. M. Clark wrote that, “instead of congregating promiscuously at different houses to sleep at night, singing objectionable songs, telling doubtful stories, and engaging in lewd conversation, these young reformers separated themselves and built a dormitory for their own accommodations in which purity and holiness should reign”. (1907: 138)

However, later writers suggest that the missionaries could have been more selective, affirming those elements within the traditional practices that were innocent of the above problems and ‘Baptize’ them as Christian celebrations. Furer- Haimendorf suggested that some of the old feasts and ceremonies, particularly the agricultural festivals could have been adapted to the new faith, given a new meaning and retained by the Christian missionaries. He

wrote, ‘yet one would think that with a little trouble an institution of an essentially social and economic character could have been re- modeled so as to be compatible with Christian tenets. Were such adjustments impossible, Europe would have long lost all its folk festivals and the Christmas tree would long ago have been condemned as a pagan symbol” (1946:53). In the same note Abraham Lotha suggests, “The majority of Nagas are Christians but the type of Christianity in Nagaland is very alien to the Naga culture. If Christianity is to contribute to the preservation of Naga culture, and more important, if it is to become meaningful, personal and relevant to the Nagas, it must be inculturated”. (2013:78).

Another Naga writer gave the following opinion, “forsaking all the missionaries came to spread the good news. But soon, they saw their task as having become two- fold- to convert and to civilize. The first was a spiritual and religious obligation, the second, a moral duty. Unfortunately, the “civilizing” became more and more immediate. Their priorities became mixed up, and they under- cut their own tremendous contributions to Naga society. The mistake of the early missionaries was that they were in a hurry. In the process, they failed to properly study and to appreciate the Naga way of life. They judged Naga society according to western ethos and only looked at the Naga world from the view point of the cultural environment under which they themselves were brought up. Not surprisingly, Naga cultural practices were seen as ‘uncivilized’ ‘Heathen’ etc, and wanting to give the best to the Naga converts, the ‘civilizing’ process began which led to condemning Naga cultural practices especially in the area of worship. Christianity failed to take root in Naga Culture. ....more than anything else, this effected the new converts in many vital ways. They had to give up most of the things they were taught to value in life, and live a new way, only because things could not be interpreted to them in their cultural context. (Chasie,1999:115).

With the onset of post modernity and globalization, the debate would take on a new meaning. As for perspective, the missionaries were human beings and they in turn made a lot of mistake. It is the turn of the present generation to re- interpret or to re correct those misgivings by indigenizing Christianity into the society, and not in indigenizing the Missionaries or their western culture into Christianity or the society.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

Of late the study of religion and culture of the indigenous tribal people has been a matter of interest of scholars all over the world. Religion had the profoundest impact on the life of an individual and the society. Religion plays a central role in every society as they teach about ultimate claims on believers lives providing a core vision which influence their socio- cultural aspirations and activities. The greatest transformation of any society in the history is brought about by religion. By studying the traditional religion of the Lothas we can draw remarkable values and guidance such as their whole system of being dominated and regulated by moral and ethical values .The spirit of democracy and mutual concern and mutual help is evident. There was a spirit of altruism, which was the ethical foundation of a communitarian society. Individual was not the primary subject but rather building up of a well knit society extending help to the poor and needy and willing to live and die for the welfare of the community was their primary understanding.

The Lothas, before the advent of British colonizers and Christian missionaries were self- sufficient, independent, colorful people. Their society projected a great sense of community- based approach and a deep co-operative relationship among themselves. In every sphere of their life, be it political, social, economic and religious, they had the concept of togetherness and oneness. The society reveals elements of egalitarian social condition. It follows a democratic form of government, where the power of people is not in the hands of a single group but with the whole community. And yet, one could also imagine the dreadful environment of head- hunting in which they lived.



The Lothas were religious people from time immemorial with their own set of beliefs and practices. Their religious beliefs and practices were not formulated into systematic set of dogmas but teaching and learning systems existed which were simply appropriated into their way of life. Modifications were made according to the changes relating to the needs of the people. They had no written tenets but the priests, elders and parents were the religious custodians. Religion permeated in all department of their life. There was no separation of the secular and the sacred. Among the Lothas, religion is so intertwined with their everyday life that distinction cannot be made between the sacred and the secular. Every dimension of their life is linked with the invisible world of the spirits. They believed that their existence on the earth is not in their hands but it all depended on the supernatural, and this feeling developed an attitude of fear towards the divine beings. Therefore, their religious belief is guided by efforts to appease the supernatural to get tangible results. Hence, their approach to religion is utilitarian and egoistic. It is utilitarian in the sense that they wanted to be on the safer side as far as the divine beings are concerned, as displeasing them may not be good for them. It is egoistic in the sense that preserving themselves from the wrath of the supernatural becomes their main religious concern. The study brings to light that the motives are obtaining food, victory over enemies, averting evil and illness. There is also a great deal of materialism inherent in their religion, because the motive behind their prayers and sacrifices are for obtaining material gains or favor from the deities. Again that is the reason why great care is always taken to appease the spirits to ward off their malignancy. The Lotha traditional religion aimed at life, fertility, prosperity, harmony between people and spirits, in this world rather than the next. There is also little speculation about the origin and nature of the cosmos.

Their belief and practices were guided by fear and superstitions. However, though fear is the basis of their religion, we also find that their attitude towards the Supreme Being is not one of

fear. They considered the Supreme Being as one who cared for them as a father would to his children, and attributes many moral qualities to him. The Supreme Being is the one they would call upon in all the significant moment of their life, and offer him prayers and thanks for his goodness. Moreover, throughout the different seasons and stages of life, they establish rituals and ceremonies to keep in touch with the supernatural. What people in the west would regard as typically secular, such as planting and harvesting crops, is closely connected to religious understanding among the Lothas. The fundamental concern of the Lotha religion with health and well- being are expressed through rituals. These religious ceremonies built up genuine bonds among the people of the village, clan and family. Festivals, feasts, dances and songs celebrate communal existence. Because religion focuses on communal well- being, the Lothas were not much concerned with eschatological concepts. For them the past and the present find their meaning in the present.

Since their religious activity focuses on how positive benefits for society can be enhanced, the Lotha traditional religion is a form of humanism, which is a communal humanism and not individualistic. Therefore, in spite of the limitations, there is also a great deal of richness in them. Though they are primitive in their nature and expressions, the Lotha religion is pragmatic, concerning themselves with securing and maintaining material advantages which promote the well- being of the community as a whole.

Thus, the traditional religion of the Lothas was not primarily for the individual but for the community of which he was a part of. Any activities that are harmful to the peace of the community and individual were regarded as inhuman activities and therefore deserved punishment. One can always draw remarkable values and guidance from the study of this traditional religion such as their whole system being dominated by and regulated by moral and ethical values. In this religion there is the spirit of mutual concern and mutual help.

This traditional religion of the Lothas which is termed as 'Animism' was supplanted by Christianity brought by the American Baptist missionaries. The people lived in isolation for centuries, and therefore out of general influence from other culture and religion until hundred and fifty years ago or so when their isolation was broken by the inroads of the British rule and the American Baptist missionaries. Their daily life which was encircled with taboos, superstition and sacrifices to gods and deities was replaced by the gospel. With the arrival of Dr Witter and his wife, the first missionaries designated to the Lothas, at Wokha in 1885, the process of evangelization of the Lothas began.

When the Christian missionaries came, there was initial formidable opposition from the animists to the new faith for several reasons. Their religion and the rites and rituals associated with it are a part of the socio- economic structure and a part of their everyday existence. Every individual adheres to religion by way of custom and practice rather than out of choice. For instance, festivals, feasts, building of the *Chumpo* (Morung), clearing of the village path, etc, among the Lothas require the participation of every individual in the society. All these were done with elaborate rituals and sacrifices to their deities. The Christian missionaries were uncompromising regarding the new converts participating in any animistic ritual. Violation of the traditional rituals and customs made the villagers fear ill luck, and called for punishment. The village not willing to risk the ire of its Gods was often instrumental in the exodus of the Christian converts of a village and thus to founding of new ones. Moreover, the entire social structure was dependent on the economic self sufficiency of the villages. The people depended on agriculture for their subsistence. Agricultural success and good harvests depended on the whims and caprices of the Deities and spirits most of whom were malignant by nature and whom, the villagers could not afford to offend. The village could never allow any individual to offend the spirits, for the repercussion would be

felt by the entire village. Therefore, when misfortune came to the villages, the Christian converts were blamed that by bringing a new faith to the villages they offended the spirit.

Gradually, because of the zeal and dedication of the pioneer missionaries converts grew. Here, the native Lotha evangelists played an important role in reaching the people and gaining converts. They carried their own food, went from village to village preaching the gospel. Most of them read up to class 4 or 5 and were not well trained and their understanding of the Bible was poor. They used very simple method of teaching but because of their dedication and commitment to the gospel, the Lothas were evangelized. Preaching in the local dialect also helped them to reach out to the people and gain converts. As the converts grew in number, Churches were established. From a humble beginning of the first Church established at Okotso village in 1904, the Lothas can take pride of the 121 churches under the banner of the Kyong Baptist Ekhumkho Sanrhyutsu KBES (The Lotha Baptist Churches Association) at present.

Despite overwhelming odds the early missionaries rendered yeomen's services to the Lothas in reclaiming them from the primitive lives. The introduction of the new religion brought tremendous changes in the character and habits of the Lothas. They learnt the value of peace, tolerance and peaceful co- existence with their fellow- men and neighbors. They recognized the value of education, sanitation and better living conditions. Christian values of universal brotherhood and the growth of education had widened their outlook, and better economic opportunities. The advent of Christianity gave a powerful push to the wheel of social change and the Lothas had taken a long stride ahead. The Lotha population is now predominantly Christians, though a countable number of the inhabitants of the villages still follow the old religious practice.

From the very beginning the American Baptist Missionaries saw the value of education to serve the purpose of evangelization. Mission through education became one of the most effective means of evangelizing among the people. What this pre- literate tribe needed first of all was a written script that the Bible might be translated to their own language. The next task was to start schools to educate the people in order to make them understand the Bible. Although the missionaries originally started schools in order to help with the missionary work, eventually these institutions benefited the region in many areas. An important aspect was the significant transformation of the Lotha society which was brought about by the new faith and modern western education. The many initial problems confronting the missionaries in the field of education were met and overcome with tact and perseverance. There was formidable opposition from the Lotha animists when it became evident that the missionary teaching was adversely influencing the students and eroded the Lotha traditional values. However with their demonstrated dedication and gospel of love, the missionary education attracted the people gradually. It resulted in inculcating discipline, self- reliance and cleanliness. Education also promoted building of personality and leadership in every sphere of the Lotha society- religious, political and professional. Education has enabled the Lothas to know more about others as well as themselves

The popularity of the mission schools made them the main educational institutions for the Lotha children. It was in the mission schools many Lothas were educated and trained who later became pastors, evangelists and teachers in their own villages. The Lothas can also take pride at the long list of social and political leaders who once filled the rolls of the schools run by the missionaries. The Lotha people became more conscious and receptive towards education in the following years after the establishment of the Mission schools and cooperated with the Government in opening schools in their area. To a great extend the sincerity of the Lotha people helped the progress of Education. The people readily constructed school

buildings, hostels and staff quarters free of cost with available local materials along with all possible help. Education played the role of an eye- opener as well as upliftment of the people. Their response to education was quite positive. It was through the initiation and participation of the people that went a long way in development of education in the area.

At present, although the percentage of literacy is high, the benefits of education have not reached well interior. The high literacy rate had also resulted in acute unemployment problem among the Lotha youth. On the other hand, the ever growing non- local migrant population has comfortably slotted itself in into the vacuum left open by the local populace whether it is in trade and retailing, loading and unloading, construction or even the service sector. The age old value of dignity of labor, seem to have eroded in their society. There is a need to understand that apart from Government employment, there are many sectors where one can obtain gainful employment – private schools and institution, NGOs, Churches etc. There is an emerging and urgent need for the policy makers to initiate programs where vocational courses are imparted along with awareness opportunities where stakeholders are inculcated with work culture and dignity of labor.

There is also broad division of the Lotha society into two sections- the educated town dwellers and the illiterate cultivators. The former shows preference for white collared jobs.

With modernization and education, the Lotha society shows a trend of rural to urban migration. Majority of the people prefer to settle in down in the urban areas as they feel that urban areas offer better quality of life, with availability of better health services, better education facilities, better transport and communication facilities, better employment and income generation avenues and better entertainment amenities in the urban areas. Thus the idea of higher standard of living coupled with lure of material possession changed some of the finest aspect of the Lotha life and society.

The impact that modern Education had on Lotha women is tremendous. Before the coming of Christianity and Education, the position of the women in the community was not an enviable one. The men gave their time to fighting and hunting, leaving all the rest of the work to be done by the women. They were under the absolute authority of their men-folk and had few civil rights and no possessions. Such a war culture promoted a patriarchal society. Many of the deliberations of the village council involved matters related to warfare and defense in which women were not involved. In this situation the women folk were relegated to the household chores and did not participate in decision making. Eventually, the attitude towards women's status was also determined by these factors. They were the 'weaker' sex and always had a subordinate status. However, progressive modernization brought on by the adoption of Christianity and modern education has gradually altered the contemporary situation of the Lotha women and they have begun participating in diverse modern activities. Her role is now not limited to the home as was in the traditional society but also outside the home.

The Lotha women are hard working and industrious. In fact, it is on these long cherished ideals of hard work, dignity and perseverance that a new age of womanhood is ushering in as an inevitable sequence to modern education. They have started realizing their position and status in the society and explicitly or implicitly started to assert equal status with their counterparts. Though the modern system of education sought to educate the people away from the traditional cultures, the enlightened women realized not to disregard their traditional settings. They continued to be the socializers of the young folks into indigenous tradition and have passed their values on to the next generation. To this end, the Kyong Eloë Hoho ( Lotha Women Organization) and other women societies of Wokha district focus on the preservation and popularization of the traditional costumes, serving as a platform for the ladies to explore and exploit their talents and skills besides advancing the problems faced by women folk in

general. Because of their very hard working nature they have a great contribution in income generation in addition to their role as a carrier and transmitter of their rich culture. They learnt to take the best from the two situations, that is, traditional and modern, and therefore maintained the mechanisms both for adaptation and for encouraging the continuity of traditional cultures in the modern age.

Education has offered new options for the women that had contributed to a change of roles. This is evident especially in the public spheres. Whereas, women traditionally were totally excluded from the exercise of authority in this sphere, today at least some have come to occupy important positions in the politics and the professions. The Lotha women have made remarkable strides in their status towards equality with men in their society. The high rate of literacy among women is an encouraging trend. In terms of proportion it may not be so much but within the district there is at least one village viz. N Longidang which has women village council members and at least two instances in New Tssori and zuxeshe where women are VDB secretaries. These are encouraging signs of gender advancement.

With the introduction of the British rule and the Christian teaching of love and brotherhood, the practice of head hunting became a thing of the past. It was replaced by a harmonious relationship among the hitherto warring villages. The spirit of reconciliation became apparent by the absence of further internecine conflicts in the area

Beginning from the arrival of the first missionary in 1885 to the present day, the Lotha society had undergone transformation in many ways. From a near static society, it has become a modern society in a state in a short time with its dynamics intensified. By inculcating modern education, the missionaries worked toward changing the life style and habits of the people and to adopt western styles. Since Christianity came from the west, it came with westernization of the people. Once the missionaries started the work among the Lotha people, not only Christianization but also social transformation was aimed at. The tribe's religious



customs and practices were considered superstitious and devil- dominated, which they had to abandon when they accepted the Christian faith.

Missionary work has brought beneficial changes in the Lotha society. Education, improved health, dispelling of ignorance and unfounded superstitions and fear, inculcation of rationality of outlook and economic changes have resulted. Training of local people in the organizational work of the church, imparted by the Christian missionaries has contributed vastly to improvement of standards of efficiency among the Lothas. Christianity had introduced rationality and simplicity in the Lotha religious beliefs. However, the contact with the west which came with Christianity was a mixed blessing. With the numerous benefits they derived from contact with the European and outsiders from the mainland, they also received contamination. For instance, although the Lothas consumed large quantities of *Soko* (rice beer), the habit of drinking wine and spirituous liquor was formerly unknown. It was introduced to them by the Europeans. There is a growing addiction, especially among the educated urban dwellers. The Nagaland Baptist Churches Council (NBCC) concerns with this issue led to the introduction of the Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition Act 1989 (NLTP) and accordingly Nagaland was declared as a dry state in June 1989.

In the early years, the missionaries had an ambivalent attitude towards the Naga indigenous culture. Their dedication to the people was also blended with a strongly critical view of the traditional religion and the various cultural practices with conscious or unconscious feelings of superiority in their relation with the heathen. The American Baptist missionaries were products of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when the western nations were vigorously expanding on the globe and western imperialism was in its prime. The feeling of cultural superiority was a by- product of the political supremacy and economic prosperity enjoyed by the western nations which reflected itself in missionary attitude as well.

There was gradual assimilation of a foreign- western culture. This was affected through education and Christianity leading inevitably to the erosion of Naga culture. The people discarded their primal animistic religion when confronted with the new faith that is Christianity. In time, acceptance of Christianity made them more and more amenable to western culture. Thus, a more revolutionary and abiding impact on their culture and ethos were made by the American missionaries. Besides, other recent factors which led to the change of life style of the people like modernization and globalization cannot be ignored. One by product of these factors is the rise of popular culture which is a challenge to the Naga culture and tradition. Looking at the present scenario where the globalizing factor has great impact on any society the Lothas are not lacking behind. In all aspect their society is going through the inevitable historical phase of change where the old is replaced by the new. Change is inevitable because society is dynamic, not static. It would not be logical to try to isolate the tribe from the influence of the dominant culture, the media and the entertainment industry. Their society would then be left in denial and left behind in the Global rat race for development and modernization. But this change must not uproot the people's identity and culture completely, because the moment they shy away from their roots they lose their identity.

Today, it is heartening to see that efforts are being made to preserve the Naga cultural heritage. A spirit of renaissance has been developing especially among the educated young generation who are taking responsibility of spreading awareness among the people, ironically made possible by modernization and Globalization where bridges are made across the world through the technological achievements

There is also a general awakening of in- group consciousness, some common forms of manifestation of which are political awareness, search for identity, revival of indigenous

culture and resurgence of old values. The primary motive behind the introduction of modern education was basically the outcome of the necessity to protect and advance their interests, ie, evangelization for the Missionaries and colonial administration for the British. Besides they held the civilizing responsibility which is known as the “white Man’s burden” as their shared goal. But what the Lothas had gained through this agency is that it has awakened among the people the consciousness to protect their rights, and also to preserve their distinct identity through widening of their mental and geographical horizons. Of late there is a clear call by traditionalists to re discover the rich Naga heritage and to educate the masses, particularly the young and western educated Nagas so that freedom and independence, which is the condition of historical facts and socio- cultural identity of the Nagas can and will continue to be the aspiration of all Nagas.

Along with all the blessings, Christianity and modern education has been as devastating as it has been enlightening. It undermined much that was good and valuable in the traditional way of life of the people. The more educated they became the more alienated they began to feel from the traditional way of life which seemed obsolete and primitive. The study takes note of the disruption of important characteristics of the Lotha forefathers’ village life some of which were the Chumpo (Morung), the Osho (Feasts of merit) and the agricultural festivals.

The introduction of modern education disrupted the indigenous system of learning and redirected them to the new pattern of modern western education, which in turn had substantial influence on the socio- cultural life of the Lothas. The *Chumpo*, the traditional learning institute of the Lothas was a hall- mark of the village in the bygone days. It is not even a hundred years ago, that it was considered as the store house of knowledge. The advent of modern education has completely changed the course of the traditional education system. It has been replaced by modern educational institutions. Along with the extinction of the system

many important skills and values are discarded. Besides the skills imparted for self-reliance, important values of life learnt in the *Chumpo* are hard work and dignity of labor, serving the community, civic sense and respect for elders. The opportunity to earn money in the Government services made many educated Nagas less industrious. In the present trend, the urgent need facing the Lothas is to try to inculcate some of the education system of the *Chumpo* (Morung) in the present educational curriculum. This not to back-track ourselves to the ancestral era, or this should not translate as anti-western education system, but should be read as improvising the basis of education in which the present system can beautifully blend with some authentic traditional mode for training every citizen, especially the younger generation.

Modern education comes with technical and mechanical wonders, but the traditional methodology of processing raw materials into finished goods manually should not be led to become obsolete. The traditional craftsmanship is fast becoming a forgotten trade. It can be argued that in the wake of modernity and scientific illumination, the Lotha youth cannot look back to the traditional system for education and be built up to the full potential to face the competitive world. It also needs to be understood that Modernization and Globalization are inevitable phenomena and in order to catch up in the rat race of modernity, the world view needs to change. However training the young with the basic traditional values and skills will greatly benefit them as individuals and as a society in many aspects. By doing so the children would learn to be self-reliant and at the same time retain some important faculties of their tradition. Traditional story writing, folk song presentations, narration or enacting dramas based on the fore father's life can help in keeping alive the cultural heritage, especially with the younger generation.

The next casualty of the onset of Christianity and modernization is the traditional practice of the *Osho* (Feast of merit). The performance of this feast was the hall- mark of social distinction for a Lotha. There are a series of feasts, each one costlier than the preceding one. Each series necessitates the expenditure of large quantities of food- stuffs. For among the Lothas, a man did not gain social prestige by merely possessing wealth, but only by spending it for the benefit of others. Every feast entitles the host to social distinction and increases progressively his standing and position in the community. It also entitles him to wear special dresses and ornaments and decorate his house in a particular manner, marking him out from others in the village.

This practice was prohibited by the British administrators and the American Baptist missionaries for several reasons. The British government saw the celebration of the feast of Merit as a motivating factor for headhunting raids because of the system of dancing around the *Menkitong* (the head tree of the villages where heads of enemies are hung) during the celebration. Another reason was the extravagant expenses involved in hosting the feast. The British government saw that hosting of the feasts involved a huge waste of essential resources and thus they discouraged its observance. The missionaries also, on their part objected to the Feast of merit presumably because the animals consumed in their course are not just slaughtered but sacrificed with appropriate invocations of the spirits. The practice also contradicts with the missionaries' rigid enforcement of teetotalism, for the feasts involved much drinking of *soko* (rice beer) and Merry-making.

By examining this practice it is learnt that the fundamental concern of the Lotha religion with the well being of the community, are expressed through rituals and ceremonies. The killing of animals for the rituals and ceremonies, the feasts, dances and songs which accompanied it all celebrates communal existence. No doubt, the series of the *Osho* ceremonies converts material wealth such as cattle, pigs, fowls, rice beer and rice into social

status. It is a means to climb the ladder of social recognition. But it is also a means for distributing wealth in the community. It shows that among the Lothas the accumulation of wealth was not for selfish or greedy motive but wealth was accumulated with idea of sharing. It adds beauty to the community life of the Lothas. Today the ceasing of this practice is of great loss, particularly the character of the whole community involvement in making fellowship and concern for the weak and poor.

The rich man who performs the *Osho* earns the title *Ekhyuo Ekhung* which means the one who boasts in victory. Here, the man 'boasts in victory' not for accumulating wealth for himself but for sharing his wealth with the community by way of lavish sacrifices and feasts, and thus earning respect and recognition from the people. There was competitive spirit to out-do their neighbors in the giving of feasts, which stimulated the rich to produce rice beyond the requirement of their household and to rear Mithun, bulls and pigs for slaughter. With every feast given, the host also acquired the right to receive increased share of meat whenever another neighbor gave a feast. This system of reciprocal gifts made for the smooth distribution of perishable food.

This socio-religious activity focuses on how positive benefits for the community can be enhanced, and therefore it is a form of humanism, which is a communal humanism and not individualistic. Today, individualism has replaced the essence of communitarian aspect that prevailed in the Lotha society. Therefore, the rich themes of sharing and values of community life contained in the traditional celebration of *Osho* can help the Lothas as they advance into post modernity. The attempt here is not to encourage the Lothas to revive the actual practice of the rituals and sacrifices of the *Osho*, but the focus is to try to derive the valuable themes inherent in it and to use it to establish a community of love, peace and equality.

In the days of yore, when the forces of nature and hostile neighbors dictated the existence of each village, it made sense to rely on divine intervention, to be in awe of stones, trees, rivers, animals and formless spirits, to appease the malevolent spirits and seek the blessing of the benevolent ones for a healthy lineage and a good harvest. The Lotha festivals thus began as a propitiation of the spirits involving rituals and sacrifices. Throughout the agricultural year, the Lothas celebrate a number of festivals such as *Tokhu Emong*, *Pikhuchak*, *muthan Ratsen*, *Ronsi*, *Ethan tssopho* etc. Among these the *Tokhu Emong* is the main festival. It is the festival of thanksgiving for bumper harvest and blessing throughout the year. The festivals are marked with colorful songs, dances and feasts but the most important aspect of these festivals is the community bonding. Surviving where danger was the biggest challenge, these festivals were a time to cement the unity of the community and also reach out to the adjoining villages. These festivals helped the young and old to take the fellow- feeling to a higher level with practices such as eating and drinking together irrespective of social and economic status, visiting the houses of friends and relative, clearing the village path and erecting fences around the village. The spirit of giving and sharing is inherent in these festivals. For instance, during the festivals, a kitchen without meat is considered a taboo because it reflected an uncaring community, and a community that did not share its resources had no dignity. Thus giving was a part of the Lotha way of life. However, discouraging these community activities led to individualism among the new converts. Wealth was now hoarded and sold in the market giving rise to the first form of capitalism. Moreover, the very essence of unity and bonding is increasingly being replaced by individualism among the Lotha. Today, the principle of communitarianism is being crept by the ideology of individualism and the essence of community bonding and sharing that prevailed in the lives of the Lothas is fading to a great extend.

The lothas living simple lives for centuries together in his natural habitat with little knowledge about the outside world had rocketed its way from a pre- literate past to a modern present within a matter of hardly one hundred and fifty years. Modern Education and the inevitable phenomena of modernization and globalization have drastically changed all aspect of the Lotha life for the better or worse. It can only be concluded by saying that at this juncture the only task now is to ensure that the best of the old does not disappear in the zest for the new. A new faith, education and economic prosperity would lose all meaning if the cultural and spiritual foundations of the society are completely forgotten.

The advent of Christianity, the spread of education and the opening up of the district, the easy means of communication, and the way of life which has to be oriented to the demands of the modern age have helped the people to assimilate many changes. The dilemma with which the Lotha tribe is faced at present is to retain its cultural identity and yet to keep pace with other technologically advanced parts of the country.



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## INTERVIEWS:

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Chunkurhomo Ezung, Age 80. Wokha Town, Wokha.  
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Churhon Murry, Age 93. Wokha Village, Wokha.  
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Merithung Odyuo, Age 75. Wokha Town, Wokha.  
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Mhonbemo Odyuo, Age 65. Yikhum Village, Wokha.  
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Nyimtsemo Ezung, Age 80. N. Longidang, Wokha.  
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Penathung Ngullie, Age 50. Longla Village, Wokha.  
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T. Pilamo Tungoe, Age 84. Changsu Village, Wokha.  
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Thungdamo Ezung, Age 60. Longsa Village, Wokha.  
*Interviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2013.*

Woshamo Paul, Age 42, SCERT, Kohima  
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Wosumo Odyuo, Age 75. Pangti Village, Wokha.  
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Yingashumo Ezung, Age 75. Wokha Town, Wokha.  
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Zantsemo Ngullie, Age 60. N. Longidang Village, Wokha.  
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