

**A STUDY ON SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY IN
NAGA SOCIETY**

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Certificate

This is to certify that this Ph.D Thesis entitled, “A Study on Socio-Cultural Impact of Christianity in Naga Society” is an authentic and original work carried out by Ms.Loína Shohe bearing Regd.No. 706/2016, date of Regd. 3rd Nov 2015 based on her field study conducted under my supervision.

The Thesis fulfils all the norms of Ph.D Thesis under the rules and regulations of Nagaland University.

To the best of my knowledge, the Thesis has not been submitted to any university or educational institute for award of any degree or diploma.

This Thesis may therefore be placed before the External Examiner for evaluation.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled *A Study on Socio-Cultural Impact of Christianity in Naga Society* submitted by me to Nagaland University in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology under the School of Social Sciences is my own work. It has not been submitted in any other institution, including this university in any other form or published at any time before.

Date:

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GLOSSARY

Abuhahwang/ Gawang/ Kahwang - Supreme Deity (Konyak)

Achine – Ritual (Sumi)

Achineu – Priest (Sumi)

Aghungu – Soul (Sumi)

Ahng - Chief (Konyak)

Ahuna Kuchu – Sumi Post –Harvest Festival

Akukatou – Supreme Chief (Sumi)

Alhou - Supreme Deity of Sumi

Amang – Ritual day (Ao)

Amthao – First Reaper (Sumi)

Anempong – Taboo (Ao)

Anisu/ani – Aunt (Sumi)

Anung Kodaker – Male Sky Spirit (Ao)

Aoleng – Konyak Festival

Aonye – Post Harvest Festival (Konyak)

Aphikimithe - Ritual related to chastement of the body (Sumi)

Aphimphi – Body (Sumi)

Apuki - Boys Dormitory (Sumi)

Apukito – Sitting area of the Sumi

Ariju – Boys Dormitory (Ao)

Asa – Colony (Sumi)

Azho - Cold Region (Sumi)

Baan – Boy's Dormitory (Konyak)

Chini – Taboo (Sumi)

Dao – A sword like weapon also popularly used in domestic works

Dolonyu – God of Judgement (Konyak)

Gennas- Hutton (1969) records genna as a derivation from Angami Naga word *kenna* meaning forbidden , it became a regular use for referring to various incidents of magico-religious rite .

Ghabo - Warm region (Sumi)

Ghüm - Log Drum (Konyak)

Ghuyi - A place where the Sumi believe the unrighteous or souls of unnatural death goes to after death.

Hawai – Illegitimate Child (Konyak)

Henbü – Taboo (Konyak)

Iliki – Girl's Dormitory (Sumi)

Jeptsu – Bridal Procession (Ao)

Kemevo/Tevo/Zhevo – Priest (Angami)

Kenna – Taboo (Angami)

Kepenopfii/ Ukekepenopfii/ Ukepenopfu – Supreme Deity (Angami)

Khagho - Village Gate (Sumi)

Khel – Sectoral Divisions in Angami villages based on clans

Kichuki –Girl’s Dormitory (Angami)

Kinempungla -Rhamnus alaternus used for ritual purpose by Aos

Kita-chir – Illegitimate Child (Ao)

Kitsungkulemba – Household Ritual of Aos

Kithilato – Land of Dead (Sumi)

Kithimi – Ghost (Sumi)

Kizie – Household Ritual of Angamis

Kodaklar – Sky Spirits (Ao)

Kulaliu – Bride (Sumi)

Kungu – Above in the Sky (Sumi)

Kungumi – Sky Spirits (Sumi)

Kodaktsungba, Anungtsungba, Longkitsungba, Longditsungba, Meyutsungba, Teroktsungba
– Different Ao Gods

Lichaba /Lijaba - Creator God (Ao)

Lidhepfu – First Reaper (Angami)

Mekhala – A woven wrap-around

Meyutsungba- God of Judgement (Ao)

Moatsü – An Ao Festival

Morung- Dormitory

Ngengpa – Priest (Konyak)

Nyüopu – Ritual Day (Konyak)

Putir/Patir - Priest (Ao)

Penna – Ritual Day (Angami)

Pine - Ritual Day (Sumi)

Pinlan – Sky Spirits (Konyak)

Sekrenyi – An Angami Festival

Sesho – Unnatural Death (Angami)

Tehuba– Boy's dormitory (Angami)

Terhünyi – An Angami Post- Harvest Festival

Tendini – Household Ritual of Aos

Terhuomia – Propitiatory Gods (Angami)

Tipuli – Land of Dead (Ao)

Tsiekrau – First Sower (Angami)

Tsüki/Zuki – Girl's Dormitory (Ao)

Tsungrem - Propitiatory Gods (Ao)

Tsüngrem mong –Pre –Harvest Festival of Aos

Tughami or *Aghau* – Propitiatory Gods (Sumi)

Tuluni – Sumi Festival

Tuqhanu – Illegitimate Child (Sumi)

Yaha- Propitiatory Gods (Konyak)

Yimching – Land of Dead (Konyak)

Ywo – Girl's Dormitory (Konyak)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Introduction

Religion is a part of every known society, albeit the forms of its existence differs and the practices involved varies; almost all religion (tries to) influence the everyday life of its adherents and play significant roles in societies. The significance of religion in society is such that academically it has secured an area of study confined to its purview, privileging it to explore approaches and methods that are as diverse and complex as the very phenomena of religion, itself is. Religion as an academic subject has invoked much contemplation, inspired many literatures, provided a base for enriching discussions and piqued the interests of many to engage in its investigations. Amongst the different approaches of understanding religion, the sociological perspective gained prominence in the early 20th century, with notable works of Durkheim's work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* published in 1912 and Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* published in 1904 and 1905 as a series of essays. Early sociologists pursued religion through the macro perspectives (i.e. study of religion in the larger society) with emphasis on the nature and function of religion. Contemporary theories have branched into micro perspectives, with theories such as the Rational Choice Theory (Stark & Bainbridge, 1987) opening new vistas to investigation of the relations between religion and individual's choice in a social world. Sociologists whether the classical or the contemporaries concern themselves more with the influence of religion in society, rather than on the origin of religion. Beckford & Demerath III (2009, p.2) identifies five sociological approaches to understanding religion- firstly, 'sociological agenda do not involve evaluations of particular faiths and convictions, nor does it assess the transcendental postulates on which they are based rather it offers more paradoxology than doxology'. Secondly, sociology of religion 'focuses on the social dimensions of religion and the religious dimensions of the social'. Thirdly,

‘sociological perspectives on religion embrace the widely different meanings attributed to the term ‘religion’ including aspects such as emotions, experiences, groups or organisations and everyday life and not just narrowed to ideas about deities, spirits or other superhuman powers alone’. Fourthly, ‘sociological approaches to religion utilise research methods which are diverse – such as social, cultural, historical, political, economic, moral, psychological, aesthetic, philosophical and so on. Sociological approaches also involve interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary investigations required by the diversity of religion as well as its multi-faceted phenomena’. Fifthly, ‘sociology of religion both borrows from and contributes to other fields of sociology. Much of its conceptual and methodological core reflects broader inquiries into non-religious cultures, organisations, patterns of inequality, and questions of self and identity’. The study of religion in a sociological perspective is therefore not a study concerned in identifying the superior theology but rather concerns itself with the relation between religion and other social realities. A new growth developed in the study of religion in the mid 20th century which sought to understand why religious changes take place (Hinells, 2005, p.10), likewise between 1960s to 1980s researches on conversion in the sociology of religion began to flourish (Roberts & Yamane, 2016, p.133). In the 19th and 20th centuries when Christianity was introduced to a wide range of societies it became a hot bed of provisions for scholars from different disciplines (Anthropology, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology and Theology) to explore various themes in relation with religious change. Study of impact of Christianity in indigenous societies became major concerns as these societies began to experience massive changes in their socio-cultural life with advent of Christianity.

The Naga people of North East India were introduced to Christianity when the British began colonizing North East India including the Naga regions in the 19th century. Within less than a century Christianity overwhelmed the Nagas and became the predominating religion in Nagaland, the home state of the Nagas. This study sets out to understand the society and culture

of the Nagas after the advent of Christianity. Understanding that religion plays a significant role in society (Durkheim, 1915; Radcliffe-Brown, 1964; Weber, 1930) and that the cultural life of a people is often influenced by religion (Malinowski, 1948; Geertz, 1973; Nye, 2003; McGuire, 2012), the change of religion in a society at a relatively short span of time, calls for an inquisitive study on how the process of ‘change’ took place, what aspects the change impacted, and most importantly what consequences the change has generated in the society. This in turn is expected to throw more light on the relation between religion and society, and how religious and social dynamics (tend) influence each other.

1.2. Conceptual Framework:

Concepts are general ideas which involve abstract thinking (Chapin, 1939, p.153). Stark and Bainbridge (1996, p.15) defines concepts “as definitions that identify abstract categories and delimit a class of “like” phenomena.” According to them there are no true or false concepts rather scientific concepts can only be judged on the basis of their usefulness. McGuire (2012) also suggested using sociological definitions as strategies rather than as “truths”. Concepts narrow the field under consideration (McGuire, 2012, p.8), it aids to isolate and identify phenomena thus serving as the building blocks of theories (Stark & Bainbridge, 1996, p.15). It is, therefore, because of the requirement as well as for its usefulness that the strategy of framing specification of terms/concepts/definitions becomes a vital part of any scientific discourse. Likewise, for a meaningful discussion, significant concepts related to the course of this study are outlined as follows.

1.2.1. Religion:

‘The term religion is regarded as derived from the Latin word *religio* originally referring to the human fear of God or other divine beings. Cicero related it to *relegere*, referring to gathering together, repeatedly passing over, or to read over again. Still others consider the

Latin term *religare* which means binding together' (Olson, 2015, p.1). Defining religion has been an arena of contestation because of the diverse forms/nature of religion itself. Infact, defining religion has not been without its criticism or intrigues. Nath (2011, p.1) citing Wilfred Cantwell Smith reasserts that the term religion as 'a system of observances and beliefs...institutionalized through a process of reification' is of comparatively recent origin and of European construct, arguing that non-Western religions like Hinduism and Islam cannot relate to western concept of religion; as traditionally they were not recognized as systems nor were they institutionalized. Smith(1982, p.xi), on the other hand, regarded religion as 'a creation for scholarly analytic purposes' by a scholar's 'imaginative acts of comparison and generalization' and that it has no independent existence from the academy. Nye (2003) describes religion as not something "mystical" and "detached from the human sphere" but as "what people do" and "how they talk about what they do". For him religion was part of the everyday life. Mircea Elaide (1959) theorized the context of everyday life as *sacred* by expounding that everyday life becomes *sacred* by experiencing the presence of a supernatural. The status of sacredness appears to be mobile which correlates to Arnold Van Gennep's notion of mobility of sacred status who in his work *The Rites of Passage* (2004) explains that one could be elevated to higher status of sacredness through initiation of certain rites.

Durkheim (1915, p.47) defines "A 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 called a Church, all those who adhere to them." This accentuates that religion is social and that it induces a sense of belonging, even as its adherents derive their notion of morality from a *sacred* source. Thus, religion appears to represent a tie between the individual and the larger social group in terms of association and in expression of shared meanings as well. Durkheim views the social function of religion in society most distinctly. In his most celebrated work *The Elementary Forms of the Religious*

Life, Durkheim (1915) argues that religion emerge out of clan solidarity and identity. Rituals and ceremonies enacted serve to renew the bonds and identity of the members. The concept of the *sacred* and *profane* was central to Durkheim's theory of religion which argues for compartmentalization of the sacred and the profane (which is regarded as 'not so sacred') in religious thought.

Geertz's (1973, p.90) definition of religion as "(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" reflects the cultural dimension of religion and focuses on how sacred symbols synthesize people's ethos – the tone, character, and quality of their life, influencing their moral life and aesthetic style and their worldview of perceiving/interpreting reality and constructing ideas of order. Religion was also studied from a cultural paradigm by Malinowski (1948) who argued that the place of religion must be considered in the scheme of culture as a complex satisfaction of highly derived needs. Malinowski's theory of religion projects religion as born out of real tragedies in human life rather than out of speculation or reflection, or illusion or misapprehension. The limited knowledge of human society i.e. the inability to control fate is seen as the breeding ground of religion in every culture which in-turn is sustained by lifelong bonds of co-operation and mutual interest creating sentiments which rebel against death and dissolution. Accordingly, religious ethics sanctifies human life and conduct and becomes a powerful force of social control supplying man with strong cohesive force.

Religion as closely related to the social structure and social organisation was further propounded by A.R Radcliffe- Brown (1964). He proposed that 'religion is an expression of a sense of dependence on a spiritual or moral power outside 'ourselves'. His theory of religion argues that the creation of an orderly social life amongst human beings can be achieved only

through certain sentiments in the minds of the members of society which control the behaviour of the individual in his relation to others. Rites were seen to be the regulated symbolic expressions of such sentiments. He further argued that religion is an important and essential part of the social machinery just as morality and law which together represent or make up the complex system by which human beings are able to live together in an orderly arrangement of social relations.

Religion, therefore, encompasses belief related to the sacred, it is however not confined to the domain of the supernatural, rather it finds expression in the lived experiences of individuals; at the same time it thrives on social, and is sustained by rituals. It is a source of meaning and values which are often shared; it provides ideas about life and direction for one's lifestyle. It also influences and reflects the structure and ethos of a society.

1.2.2. Society:

The term society is derived from the Latin word *societas* meaning “companionship”, “good-fellowship”, “pleasurable consorting together”, Giddings (1904, p.162) referring to these meanings added that it means ‘the individuals collectively regarded that consort’. Here, collectivism appears to be the defining character, on the other hand, Copp (1992, p.187) says collectives such as families, business organizations and monasteries are not societies nor are certain townships’. *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* (1988) defines society as ‘a commonsense category which equals society to the boundaries of nation-states’. However, Copp (1992, p.187) argues that ‘societies must be distinguished from states and from nations, since some societies are neither states nor nations’ while adding that ‘any state or nation will typically comprise a society’.

In identifying a society, therefore, instead of relying on its ‘collectivism’ nature alone or simply relating it to a ‘nation-state’ examining its other key characteristics may throw light

on its conceptualization. Aberle et al (1950) identifies nine functional prerequisites of a society – (i) provision for adequate relationship to the environment and for sexual reproduction (b) role differentiation and role assignment (c) communication (d) shared cognitive orientations (e) a shared, articulated set of goals (f) the normative regulation of means (g) regulation of affective expression (h) socialization and (i) effective controls of disruptive forms of behaviour. A form of ethics related to all aspects of life (social, political, economic) and regulation of sexual reproduction such as marriage can be discerned here. Also forms of stratification prevail with specific roles and statuses. The members have interactions, share common ideas about life, have common interests and values. There are also effective mechanisms of social control to regulate rules and maintain norms of appropriate expressions. The new members are socialized to follow the norms and defaulters are to be punished. Moreover, according to Aberle et al (1950, p.100), specific structural arrangements for meeting the prerequisites may differ from one society to another and in course of time change in any given society. Thus, reflecting the dynamism of structures between societies and the nature of it to change in any given society with change of time.

Copp (1992) also postulates four key characteristics of society, first is that it is multi-generational and extended through time. Secondly, membership is not a matter of choice, in the beginning, for one's society is inherited at the beginning of one's life, along with one's family. Third, it need not be organized, hierarchically, or institutionalized; it need not have a complex social system of roles and statuses. The fourth and most important (according to him) is that the members have interaction among themselves in activities directed to securing the material necessities and priorities of life, or to secure priorities identified in their culture; and that their interactions be governed by a system of rules that is at least implicitly accepted in the group and incorporated in their culture as a norm for interaction. There is also provision which provides the framework for its member's lives, including their friends and socially most

important acquaintances. This informs that a society is multi-generational, that new members are mostly born into it, that a society can be without hierarchy and have simple roles and statuses. However, its spine should be that members have communications, that there are set rules and conventions which they are expected to follow in their pursuit of necessities in life. The interaction of the members is governed by norms and recognizes the network of kinship, friendship or acquaintances. There are certain values the inculcation/acquisition of which determines the society's recognition of individual behaviour/ achievements.

Thus, when we say a society it implies- a group of people, inclusive of their customs, lifestyles and values. It also includes the structural aspects of that group such as the organisation of institutions as also the rules and nature of interaction between its members, the forms of social control, socialization and orientations they follow. Another key character is the nature of society to change.

The change which pertains to the change in the social arrangements of a group or society is considered as social change. In considering social change Ruivah (1993, p.4) pointed out that change in society should be examined keeping in view whether the change is even in all aspects of the society or change is rapid in some aspects and slow in some other aspect or aspects. The nature of change in a society is either bound to be a gradual diffusion of new values and institutions or a sudden disruption of the social system. When change takes place in society in a gradual diffusion it is to be expected that the society may not face much complexities in adapting to the new values or institutions whereas when a sudden disruption takes place within a social system the particular society if ill equipped to adapt with the new system may face traumas and complexities in the aftermath. Ogburn (1950) used the concept of *cultural lag* while trying to explain social change. According to him a *cultural lag* exists when two or more social variables which were once in balance or adjustment becomes maladjusted due to their difference in rate of change.

In examining social changes Yinger (1963) viewed five logical possibilities in the relationship of religion and social change - (1) there is no connection between religion (including its changes) and social change; they relate to different spheres of man's life. (2) Social changes (economic developments, growth of knowledge, shifts in technology etc) cause religious change. (3) Religious institutions and values prevent change in the society. (4) Religion initiates change as an independent variable. (5) Religion is part of a complex interacting system and religious development may be understood as response to fundamental changes in their social environment.

1.2.3. Culture:

The line between culture and religion is often blurred and the two terms tend to overlap; this perhaps is because the two are closely related, such that Nye (2003, p.21) conceived the idea that 'the study of religion is the study of culture'. However, while the core of religion is sacredness, culture on its own is not necessarily sacred. Radcliffe-Brown (1964, pp.4-5) defines "culture as a process by which a person acquires, from contact with other persons or from such things as books or works of art, knowledge, skills, ideas, beliefs, tastes, sentiments." Here, religion can be seen as something which is also learnt from others. Geertz (cited in Nye 2003: 39) views culture as 'historically transmitted patterns of meanings'. Hence, culture has meanings which appear to be passed down through generations. Accordingly, echoing Nye's (2003, pp.46-47) observation "culture refers to two distinct areas of life; (a) culture as cultural products, i.e., what people do in literature, art, music and so on; and (b) culture as a shared system or way of life". Religion in this sense is understood as a form of culture but every culture is necessarily not religious.

Acknowledging, that arguments as to whether *religion* and *culture* are synonymous or separated are no longer pressing matters when fresh orientations of how the two are related and

cannot be studied without taking the other into account has surfaced significantly (Hinells, 2005, pp.7-8). For the purpose of this study employing the Durkheimian (1915) concept of religion as *sacred*, a forbidden thing set apart from the ordinary ways of life (*profane* or secular), *culture* here may be pursued, perhaps ambitiously, with understanding to mean the ways of life which may not necessarily be sacred without the influence of religion; in other words the present research proposes that while religion is by itself sacred, culture without the initiation of the sacred is not so, and one may differentiate between the two in such a manner.

However, culture is dynamic and not static (Nye, 2003, p.47). For its own survival a culture has to keep evolving (Herskovits (1967:6).The pace of change can be slow or quick (Ogburn, 1950). Likewise, just as ‘culture tends to change at differing paces so is the case with different dimensions of culture; thus conative dimension which relates to everyday life- eating, dressing, worshipping and the like- is likely to change at a faster pace as compared with the cognitive and normative dimensions’ (Oommen, 2009, p.5). There are also different factors which can bring cultural change in a society.

For many indigenous societies cultural change have taken place with conversion to Christianity. Conversion to Christianity resulted in breakaway from their indigenous culture (Laugrand, 2012, p.4). This change resulted in the dichotomy of “traditional” and “modernity” as traditional became associated with the native culture and modernity became synonymous with Christianity; thus the concept of transition from ‘traditional to modernity’ became popular in the study of conversion to Christianity. Dennis (1997) mentioned diffusion, acculturation and transculturation as categories of cultural change that occurs as a result of contact between societies. According to Dennis (1997) when majority culture traits diffuse a society on a massive scale – acculturation frequently is the result. In such a situation the culture of the receiving society is significantly changed. However, there often is a syncretism, or an

amalgamation of traditional and introduced traits. He further explains while acculturation is what happens to an entire culture when majority cultural traits overwhelm it, then transculturation is what happens to an individual when he or she moves to another society and adopts its culture. The studies on impact of Christianity on societies which experienced conversion to Christianity, therefore, were scrutinized at first through social anthropological theories with concepts of acculturation, cultural contact, syncretism and cultural change. Laugrand (2012, p.5), however, notes “These terms have been replaced by new ones such as incorporation, religious dialogue, indigenization, translation, and conversation...” thus the new trend emphasis more on the negotiation, participation and response of the native communities as opposed to the earlier notion of being simply imposed with Christianity .

Sahay (1966) identified five cultural processes- oscillation, scrutinization, combination, indigenization and retroversion to analyze the impact of Christianity in indigenous communities. Accordingly ‘oscillation’ was defined as the simultaneous observance of traditional culture (influenced by the indigenous beliefs and practices) and Christian practices/values. ‘Scrutinization’ was the process that leads to ‘elimination’ of certain indigenous culture and ‘retention’ of others through proper scrutiny. Traditional cultural elements which conflicted with Christianity were eliminated but social practices which did not conflict with Christian beliefs and identity were retained. ‘Combination’ is described as the mixing up or combination of retained indigenous culture with newly introduced Christian elements, whereas, ‘Indigenization’ referred to the process by which partial replacement of indigenous belief or practices by functionally similar Christian elements takes place. The process of re-evaluating previously eliminated indigenous culture and readopting after necessary modification to change the needs and outlook of the converts was defined as ‘retroversion’.

1.2.4. Conversion:

Conversion, in Western expression, is an etymological derivation of the Latin term *conversio*, it represents a translation of the Greek word *metanoia*, literally implying *going the other way* (Olson, 2015, p.55).

According to Robinson & Clarke (2003, p.5) 'In Sociology the term conversion is complex as it has been borrowed from outside the tradition and therefore lacks in specification of it being narrowed down to mean only a particular reality'. Over the years exceptional sociological works on conversion has provided diverse perspectives of the concept resulting in more difficulty in standardizing the definition of conversion.

According to Lofland & Stark (1965, p.862) conversion is "When a person gives up one such perspective or ordered view of the world for another we refer to this process as conversion." For Snow and Machalek (1984, p.170) conversion concerns "...not only a change in values, beliefs and identities, but more fundamentally and significantly, it entails the displacement of one universe of discourse by another or the ascendance of a formerly peripheral universe of discourse to the status of a primary authority." On the other hand, Ifeka-Moller (1974, p.57): in her work related to conversion in Nigeria asserts "I take conversion to mean a change of affiliation from cult to church, or from orthodox Christianity to spiritualist church." While dealing with the various theories of conversion in the context of Islam and Christianity, in their edited book *Religious Conversion in India*, Robinson & Clarke (2003, p.6) observed "It does appear though that it is best to demarcate 'conversion' as shaped by the historical experiences and meaning systems of Islam or, even more significantly, Christianity from conversion which may then be employed as a neutral sociological term to understand change of religion, beliefs and practice."

Following their propositions conversion is understood as a change of religion or foregoing of change in certain beliefs and practices; these change(s) may then be understood to be influenced by certain historical experiences and meaning systems from other religion or religious group. More significantly, conversion involves change of identity, worldviews, and affiliation to institutions besides structural changes.

The nature of conversion had been a bone of contention between religious believers and social scientists with the later dismissing claims of divine intervention in individual lives as causes for conversion and suggesting instead that such has human origins (Heirich, 1973, p.1). However, religious phenomenon such as conversion cannot always be reduced to explanations that does not include the religious/spiritual aspect because in a conversion religious traditions providing models, guidelines, or theologies for a valid conversion and rituals are involved too (Rambo, 1999, p. 264). Therefore the spiritual aspect has been stressed to be considered in analysing conversion.

When Christianity was introduced to different indigenous societies in the 19th and 20th centuries different theories materialized in explaining conversion. The intellectualist theory was popularized by Horton (1971, pp.45-46) where he explained conversion in African experience as a shift in the cosmology where a traditional cosmology consisting of a two tier system i.e., the microcosm (with the lesser spirits having more prominence in their everyday local life) and macrocosm (the belief in the Supreme being as concerned with the whole and distant from their everyday life) persisted; with exposure to the wider world the local life experienced different political and economic development and as the local people began interacting with people outside their microcosm, the microcosm explanation of events became implausible hence the lesser spirits retreated and the Supreme Being took direct control of their everyday life. Ifeka- Moller (1974) on the other hand theorized that social-structural factors affected change of religion the most since cosmology itself was embedded in a social order and

she identified social conditions such as “*Colonial Rule, “Negative” Economic Change , Political Change , Education*” etc which promotes conversion. Carmody (2018) viewed conversion through the missionaries’ perspective, analysing the role of schools in religious conversion and concluded that socio-cultural factors predominates over Horton’s thesis of traditional cosmology as the main reason for conversion amongst the South Zambians of Africa. Hence, the intellectual and social structural theory has been in debate over which presides in the phenomena of conversion.

The Post- colonial theory also emerged as an approach which examined the experience of people in Africa, Asia and Latin America experiencing conversion to world religion especially Christianity after being colonized (Rambo, 1999, p.262). This theory explains conversion of the oppressed people as being overwhelmed by the presence of colonial power military, economic, and cultural power shaping the superstructures and infrastructures of concerned societies. This perspective which views the numerous ‘changes’ that came with the colonial rule as a favourable climate for conversion is an extension of Horton’s (1971).

Approaches to understanding conversion through the converts was made significant with Lofland and Stark’s (1965) model of conversion which identified ‘predisposing conditions’ i.e., attributes of persons prior to conversion and ‘situational contingencies’ as processes engaged in conversion. Snow and Machalek (1984) further emphasized analyzing the convert’s account in understanding conversion.

Conversion can be individual or communal, a personal transformation or institutional affiliation, happening in a single moment of crisis or engaged in as a lifelong process of change (Cumpsty, 1980, p.123). Hence, a single theory becomes insufficient in explaining conversion of different experiences, time frames and circumstances. Rambo (1999, p.259) had, therefore, deemed it necessary to utilize diverse theories to fully appreciate the complexity and variety

involved in the process which would in turn foster more sophisticated comparative studies of conversion. Unlike the earlier tradition of relying on single perspective/theory the trend has now emerged to incorporate various theories even ‘different disciplines’ (Robinson & Clarke, 2003) in understanding religious conversion.

1.2.5. Secularization:

The concept of secularization became popular in the sociology of religion in the 1960s with Peter Berger’s *The Sacred Canopy* (1967) which defined secularization as ‘...the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols’, Bruce (2006) observed that “Following Max Weber, the American sociologist of religion Peter Berger (1967) has argued that the monotheism of Judaism and Christianity contributed to the rationality of the West. Bruce (2006, p.414) further agreed that “...the rationalizing tendency of Christianity created space for secular alternatives.” For Weber it was the rationalization of action which enabled the modern world to come into being, the resultant of rationalization on the other hand was ‘disenchantment’ which implied that people no longer valued the concept of mystery or “the mysterious” itself (cited in Swatos & Christiano, 1999, p.212). The intricate historic relationship between Christianity, secularization and modernity thus makes the concept of secularization and modernity an indispensable tool of analysis in the study of Christianity. The varied meanings of secularization which followed post-Weber’s idea made Shiner (cited in Porter, 1973, p.67) to suggest abandoning the concept entirely. However, acknowledging that too much literature exist already and that a change of the terminology would not resolve the problem he proposed drawing the lines on three basic meanings: *transposition* (aspects of religious belief or experience shifted from a sacral to a purely human context); *desacralization* (loss of the sense of the sacred); and *differentiation* (religious norms and institutions become distinct from secular ones. Despite the varied meaning of secularization the common understanding of the concept is that secularization refers to a

separation between what is considered as sacred or religious and what is considered as secular. In other words, in secularization the dichotomy of what is religious and what is secular becomes identified.

These concepts served to act as guideposts for manoeuvring the information collected and aided in organization /arrangement/interpretation of data; however keeping in mind the reality and dynamics of the subject under study i.e., 'religion'; the context of the social structure, the culture of the society and the specific characteristics of the religion itself were considered keeping the door open for other relative concepts and theories to be integrated whenever required.

1.3. A Brief Introduction of the Nagas:

The Nagas are a collective of 40 to 60 tribes inhabiting the regions that falls within the states of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Burma under the present state boundaries of India (Thomas, 2016, p.1). Nagas are said to have migrated from Mongolia and then through southwestern China and Myanmar (Lotha , 2016, p. 5), reached Makhel in present day Manipur before each tribe dispersed in different directions (Nuh, 2002, p. 23). While they inhabit other areas too, the Nagas pre-dominates the state of Nagaland which has an area of 16,579 square kilometers (6,401 sq mt) and a population of 1,980,602 per the 2011 census of India.¹ The state is inhabited by 17 major tribes - Angami, Ao Chang, Chakesang, Kachari, Khianmniungan, Konyak, Kuki, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Rongmei, Sangtam, Sumi , Yimchunger, Zeliang , as well as a number of sub- tribes (Lanunungsang & Ovung, 2012, p . 2).

Nagaland till 1963 was known as Naga Hills, remaining a district of Assam from its formation in 1866, till the decolonization of the Indian Sub-continent in 1947 (Achumi, 2012,

¹ <https://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/districtlist/nagaland.html>

p.ix) . The land of the Nagas were carved out and placed in Burma and India following the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826 (Chasie, 2005, p.253).The peace treaty ended the attempt of Burmese influence and formalized the foundation of British power and influence over the whole North East India (Achumi, 2012, p.1). Thus, ‘Naga Hills’ came under colonial rule however active British administration began in the ‘Hills’ only in 1881.

It was under the protection and moral support of the British Government Christianity came to the Naga Hills in the 19th century (Achumi, 2012, p.69). Before the coming of Christianity in Nagaland the Naga people followed their indigenous religions. The Gospel was first preached at Molungyimchen and that was “... the beginning of change from the old faith, culture filled with superstitions and fear, to the gracious act of the cross” (Imchen, 1993, p.153). According to Sema, J. (2013) before the advent of Christianity, the life of the Nagas was full of fear due to superstitions, there were too many *achine*² which hindered their economic life and to get rid of poverty and underdevelopment, they were ready to embrace Christianity. Moreover, Sema, J. (2013, p.57) concludes the lack of deep philosophy in their indigenous religion to explain facts satisfactorily and the need to understand God fostered them to embrace Christianity. At present, Christianity is the predominant religion of Nagaland with 87.92% of its population professing it (Census 2011).³ The Christian missionaries discouraged the old way of Naga life and thus significantly with the gradual and progressive acceptance of Christianity, the shift of the cultural loyalty from native traditions to Christianity changed the outlook and living culture of the Nagas (Achumi, 2012, p.87).

1.4. Review of Literature

Durkheim (1915) in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* argues that religion emerges out of clan solidarity and identity and that rituals and ceremonies serve to

² Achine is a term used for ritual by the Sumi Naga.

³ <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/state/13-nagaland.html>

renew the bonds and identity of the members. He also constructs religion as a source of sacredness and separates it from profane.

According to Malinowski (1948) in his work *Magic Science and Religion* there are no peoples without religion and magic, nor are there, any race lacking either in the scientific attitude or in science. He writes in every primitive community, there have been found two clearly distinguishable domains, the Sacred and the Profane; i.e., the domain of Magic and Religion and that of Science. Traditional acts and observances, regarded as sacred, are carried out with reverence and awe, hedged around with prohibitions and special rules of behavior; associated with beliefs in supernatural forces, with ideas about beings, spirits, ghosts, dead ancestors, or gods. On the other hand, art or craft such as forms of hunting, fishing, tilling, or search for food are careful observation of natural process with a firm belief in its regularity, with the power of reasoning and are rudiments of science.

In the book *Religion and Society* AR Radcliffe-Brown (1964) emphasized on the role of religion in society arguing that , religion is an important and essential part of the social machinery just as morality and law which together represent or make up the complex system by which human beings are able to live together in an orderly arrangement of social relations. Accordingly, he opined that it is not the origins of religion that should be in focus but rather the social functions, i.e., the contribution that they make in forming and maintaining the social order that should be dealt with.

Religion as a social construction can be found in Peter Berger's (1967) *The Sacred Canopy* where Berger spoke of religion as a human projection of a sacred cosmos. He regards social realities to be legitimized by religion. Berger said that religion is essentially a set of alienated realities that become internalized within individual identity providing explanations and making sense of their lives and surroundings, especially during times of personal or social crisis.

Robert Wuthnow (1992) tried to project how essential it is to invoke the sacred in the everyday affairs of human life in *Rediscovering the Sacred*, Wuthnow, speaks of finding the relation between sacredness and everyday lives. He said it is natural to begin with everyday reality because that is where so much time is actually spent, that an examination of the plain humdrum of daily existence if found lacking in sacred could be rectified to better the everyday life by rediscovering or recreating the sacred in it.

In his work *The Protestant Ethics and Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber (1930) theorized that religious ethics influences the everyday life of its adherents and lead to social change. On the other hand he also argued that the rationalization of modernity was leading to the process of secularization as people were starting to lose their awe for religion and becoming 'disenchanted' with it in the modern set up. Srinivas (2013) in his work *Social Change in Modern India* defined 'Secularization' as a state where what was previously regarded as religious has now ceased to be such, and that it also implies a process of differentiation which results in the various aspects of society, economic, political, legal and moral, becoming increasingly discrete in relation to each other.

Close to Weber's theory of religious values which influences individual's everyday life E.E. Evans- Pritchard (1976) in his book *Witchcraft Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* also recognized religion as a system of values which regulates human conduct. He further argues that religion should be studied describing how people think of their reality and the various ways the belief influence their lives rather than taking into account their validity or their being fallacious.

Mircea Elaide (1959) in the book *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion* theorized that everyday life is made *sacred* by experiencing the presence of a supernatural. The status of sacredness appears to be mobile according to Arnold Van Gennep in his work *The*

Rites of Passage (2004) where he explains that one could be elevated to higher status of sacredness through initiation of certain rites.

Nye (2003) in his book *Religion the Basics* describes religion as not something mystical and detached from the human sphere but as what people do and how they talk about what they do. He said religion is a part of everyday life, that it is an aspect of culture.

Clifford Geertz (1973) in his work *The Interpretation of Culture* presented religion as consisting of a cluster of symbols that made up an ordered whole and providing a charter of the ideas, values and lifestyles of a society. Culture was defined as a way of life and a framework for how a person behaves and sees the world. According to him religion is one of the elements which constitute a 'cultural system'. In this context religion is seen not simply confined to the domain of the supernatural but a reality which finds expression in the lived experiences of individuals and in the ethos of a community. However, culture is not reflected as religion itself instead it is to be found as a part of culture, permeating culture or perhaps separated from it.

The perspective of understanding religion through an analysis of the society is echoed in Barman's (2011) work in *Religion and Society in North East India* where he remarked that religion is the ideological reflex of the real world and its form is determined by the structure of the world. He expounded that religious practices observed by a particular group of society such as their rites and rituals, the gods and goddesses they worship etc differ from those of another group, because people living in that group have a different socio-economic surrounding.

In his work *Religion and Society among the Coorgs* Srinivas (2003) noted how structural cleavages defined by religion prevailed among the Coorgs. He said that there was segregation between sexes and different ideals were held up for men and women; men played more active parts during festivals than women, women were also expected to observe stricter

code of conduct then men. He also added that distinctions between different generations prevailed and enormous emphasis was laid on seniority.

In his book *Peculiar Customs and Rites of the Himalayan People* Sharma (2000) said that social customs of any human group are long established usages which dominate all round socio-cultural activities of the society concerned. He further elaborated that certain sets of rites and rituals in every society linger on in their original forms despite their irrelevance to changed conditions and that on account of these historical, social and psychological factors multiple sets of socio-cultural customs, rites and rituals are attested in various groups all over the world.

David A. Snow and Richard Machalek (1984) in their paper *The Sociology of Conversion* while addressing the nature and causes of conversion states that *convert's accounts* should be constructed and composed to serve as topics of analyses which would assist in understanding not only the process of conversion, but further provide information on the differences and similarities in which conversion is constituted in different groups apart from the construction of personal biographies related to religious change.

The western method of studying religion resulting in emergence of differentiating two categories of religious traditions- one which was considered of 'virtuoso' religiosity related to sacred objectives such as holiness, spiritual blessings, and salvation and the other as 'popular' religiosity which was considered profane and related to people's pragmatic daily needs is mentioned in McGuire's (2012) book *Sociology of Religion*. In it she notes that the former (linked with the social and religious elites) became established as 'official' religion which were prescribed, regulated, and socialized by organized religious groups and the later (related to uneducated and superstitious masses) as 'nonofficial' religion characterized by unorganized, inconsistent, heterogeneous beliefs and practices and a distinct absence of religious specialists composing a separate organizational framework. According to McGuire the establishment of

“official” religion by definition began excluding “people’s” religion which includes the religious expressions characteristic of indigenous peoples in colonized lands.

In the book *A Reader in Primal Religious Traditions and their Select Movement in India*, Longkumer and Moanungsang (2012) opine that the concept of religion seems to be preconditioned by popular Western Value system and tribal religion and culture are considered inferior on basis of material backwardness. They affirm that tribal people do not like to be called heathen, savage, primitive or superstitious and that words such as animistic, pre literature, traditional or ethnic are not accurate. Instead quoting Harod Turner they preferred to call religion of the indigenous tribes as Primal religion, denoting a religion in existence prior to the universal religion.

Vashum (n.d) traces the history of colonial extension and missionary expansion in non-European world in his article *Colonialism, Christian Mission, and Indigenous: An Examination From Asian Indigenous* where he states that the history of modernity is characterized by colonial extension and missionary expansion in the non-European world. He argues that when the European colonial forces establishes control over non-European countries such as Asia, Africa, Latin America and Pacific Islands, it consequently provided opportunities for Christian missionaries to follow suit with their missionary adventurism. Similarly, in her work *The Impact of Colonial Contact on the Cultural Heritage of Native American Indian People*, Dalal (2011) writes that as more Europeans began arriving and settlements expanded in America, the colonialists became more interested in acquiring land through any means necessary, one of the methods to achieve this became through conversion to Christianity and missionaries were sent to Europe to proselytize the Native American peoples. Rambo (1993) in his work *Understanding Religious Conversion* said the opening of the so called New World, made possible by an extraordinary burst of exploration by the Portuguese and Spanish (and later the French, Dutch, and English), allowed the missionary enterprise of Christianity to spread to

what is now North, Central, and South America, all of Africa, parts of Japan, Korea, China, the Philippines, and many other places.

In explaining change of religion among indigenous people Brock (2005) in the book *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change* remarked that change is often triggered by agents outside the society such as foreign missionaries, but requires proponents within the community if it is to have an impact. She stated that change can only be analyzed if the researcher is aware of the situation before, during and after a process of change. Further she added that the involvement of indigenous agents in the process of change is essential, that it is difficult to impose change on communities from outside, as change can only occur with support from within the community.

Robinson & Clarke (2007) in their book *Religious Conversion in India* observed that conversion is perceived to be rarely a transformation in the realm of ideas and beliefs alone rather, other areas of social life change as well. That in Indian context, historically new faiths and creeds have negotiated and sometimes clashed with prevailing patterns of kinship, marriage and inheritance; and that food conventions, sartorial codes and occupational arrangements have manifested mutation. According to them, the degree of transformation that results from conversion wherever or however it takes place works itself out through multiple social and cultural processes.

In his article *Conversion to Christianity among the Nagas, 1876-1971* Eaton (1984) argues that there is no correlation between a tribe's exposure to the mission or the government by comparing the Angami Naga's conversion at a relatively slower pace than the isolated Sema (Sumi) Naga. The reason for the Nagas conversion Eaton explained was intellectual; he pointed to their cosmology and how they were related to social situations. He argued that the arrangement of aligning the Christian cosmology into the Naga religious system reveals the

patterns behind the different Naga tribes pace of conversion and ultimately provide an answer to their cause of conversion in the first place.

The blending of a new religion and old culture successfully was shown by Macdonald Fraser (2013) in his Phd Thesis, *Christianity and Culture Change among the Oksapmin of Papua New Guinea*. Fraser analyzed how the Oksapmin people of New Guinea had converted to Christianity and yet been able to retain their traditional culture. He observed that the Oksapmin were able to syncretise the new religion with their traditional culture by indigenizing Christianity within their own cultural framework instead of discarding their traditional culture when they converted to Christianity.

Nwafor (2016) in his article *Integrating African Values with Christianity: A Requirement for Dialogue between Christian Religion and African Culture* blamed the missionaries for creating a dichotomy between African values and culture from Christian teaching and practice instead of creating a dialogue between the two. According to him, right from the early period of Christianity, two taciturn opposing camps emerged on whether conversion to Christian religion requires a radical discontinuity between one's culture and what was called "Christian culture" or continuity with positive elements in the cultures encountered by Christianity. The discontinuity camp maintains that becoming a Christian, one must become a new person with a totally different identity from one's original cultural identity. On the other hand, the opposing faction sees conversion to involve a substantial continuity between one's culture and the new "Christian culture." The error of the missionaries, he said, became a missing point because the same continuity that made Christianity a second nature to western life was denied to the African people and their culture, leading to the confusion and crisis in the identity of African Christians.

In his work *Christianity and Austronesian Transformations: Church, Polity and Culture in the Philippines and the Pacific* Yengoyan (2006) observed that in Philippines and the Pacific Christianity did not arrive in a vacuum. That the conversion of “heathens and pagans” to a world religion was one issue, and the other was the civilizing influence which was actively pursued by the agents of conversion. He said the civilizing impact was great and deep on the cultures. In the spread of Christianity, the spread of Christian teachings was expressed through the Bible, the tenets based on Christ, the Pentecost, the conception of the Resurrection, and a dedication to certain teachings in the New Testament. Consequently, the negation of encountered social orders took the form of comprehending sources of indigenous as “evil” or “falseness” which were gradually replaced by new sources of “goodness” and “truth”.

In *Christianity and Kultura: Visions and pastoral projects*, a study between Christianity and native culture in East Timor, a South East Asian country, by Silva (2018). She found that *kultura*, customary practices, and Christianity were exclusive moral realms, that native people accept the fact that Christianity did not encompass *kultura* and that religion and *kultura* were considered as different domains of action. She asserts that the relations between *kultura* and Christianity were associated with conversion to Christianity; that the expectation of discontinuity on conversion to Christianity resulted in the break with the practices and beliefs of native culture.

A study on impact of Christianity in Koraput district of South Odisha was done by Naik (2012) who discusses in his paper *Christian Missionaries and their Impact on Socio-Cultural Development- Undivided Koraput District a Study* that the services of the missionaries led to the transformation of the spiritual and socio-economic life of the people especially the poor and Dalit people. However, the missionary movement was followed by emphatic indigenous response because the denunciation of the traditional social structure evoked a sense

of self-analysis in the minds of the educated people who carried on the movement of revival and transformation. He said that the general infiltration of the missionary propaganda to the social structure initiated a change, where the ideas and efforts of the missionaries acted and counter-acted to raise a reformed society in Orissa.

Observing the impact of Christianity on Hmar culture, Sanate (2013) in his article *Christianity –Its Impact among the Hmars in North East India* remarks that Christianity had a far reaching impact on Hmar culture and tradition. That with almost cent percent Hmar population being converted to Christianity, the various cultural activities are no longer observed; traditional cultural dance have become items in cultural functions and some occasions, Hmar cultural festivals, other social gatherings and amusement have lost their importance and fallen into complete disuse.

In the article, *The impact of Christian Mission and British Colonialism among the Kuki People in North East India*, Haokip (2012) asserts that the combined force of mission and power was used to bring Christian gospel and establish Christian Church among the Kukis. He says that the missionaries vis-à-vis colonialists ruined the local culture and traditions and that the missionaries were responsible for a nation's downfall through cooperating with a colonial government that was bent on suppressing the Kukis, and thus being one of the key factor for the dire socio-politico condition of the Kukis today.

An article by Ramya (2012) *Traditional Religious Beliefs, Practices and Impacts of Christianity among the Nyishis* says that modernity in the form of Christianity has brought in a new form of culture among the Nyishis of North East India. He writes that people no longer sing traditional songs or traditional dances as they are considered to be primitive and belonging to an uncultured way of life, western music and dance have replaced these in and outside the churches. He observes that a borrowed culture has become the guiding principle of the present

younger generation and that the Nyishis are in danger of losing their own identity with a distinct culture.

Studying the impact of Christianity among the Misings a tribe of Assam, Pegu (2011) observed in his work *Changes of Mising Religious Beliefs and Practices: Impact of Hinduism, Christianity, and other Religions*, that adoption of Christianity led to socio-cultural changes such as abolition of traditional faith and practices, festivals and rice-beer; sundays became compulsory holiday for them, villages were divided into Christians and non-Christian groups and new religious institutions and functionaries began to grow. He noted that concerned with the cultural invasion a sense of cultural consciousness began to grow among 'the educated elite' which has recently led to 'revitalization' movement in their society.

Snaitang (2009) in his article *Christianity and Change among the Hill tribes of Northeast*, comparing the negative and positive impact of Christianity among the Hill tribes of North East India, notes that the presence of Christianity brought some negative impact on the traditional religious faiths and practices; however its contribution in introducing written script, creating indigenous literature, establishing an extensive network of educational institutions, medical services , doctrinal teachings and inclusive ecclesiastical organizations was highly significant for development of the societies.

Vanlalchhuanawma (2007) in his book *Christianity and Subaltern Culture: Revival Movement as a Cultural response to Westernization* argues that the most cherished elements of Mizo cultural heritage was assaulted by the use of Western Christian ideology; the Mizo community therefore responded to the cultural conflict by organizing revival movements which asserted their traditional culture and resulted in natural indigenization of Christianity and adaption of Mizo Christianity to the modernizing process leading to a reciprocal adaptation between the indigenous and western culture.

In the book, *North East India – A Profile* Horam (1990) talks about the advent of Christianity and some of its impact on Naga society. Horam has stated here that many Nagas after coming of Christianity discarded their age-old customs and embraced a new culture which was foreign to them. He says that the Naga people are imitating and aping a culture without properly understanding and that the western culture which the Nagas are aping cannot be called modernity in the Naga context because most Nagas still live in their traditional homes, have the same economy, the same mode of cultivation and habitat.

In *Christianity in North East India* F.S. Downs (1983) said the gospel was responsible for ushering a new life-style in the North East regions. In it he laments how the many cultural aspects of Naga which were not contradicting with Christian principles were also given up as the American Baptist mission had little sympathy and less appreciation of the Naga culture ones. However, he did not elaborate on what those cultural aspects were nor did he furnish details about the consequences of giving up those cultural practices.

Veprari Epao (1993) in his book *From Naga Animism to Christianity* says the positive contribution of Christianity on Naga society was giving up head hunting, hygienic lifestyle, education, but he also remarked that there may be some negative effects in the culture from the transformation.

In his book *Ancient Ao Naga Religion and Culture* Panger Imchen (1993) speaks of the integrated relation between ancient Ao religion and cultures back then and he observed the loss of indigenous culture with conversion to Christianity. He mentions the loss of qualitative life of the Ao Nagas in contemporary times.

Thong (2009) in his thesis *A Clash of Worldviews: The Impact of Modern Western Notion of Progress on Indigenous Naga* articulates that the belief of the West that Nagas need to be 'saved' with the help of the West's unceasing re-evangelization smacks an aura of

incessant spiritual colonialism and supremacy and that such mental attitude confirms that the marginalized colonial subjects have never been and will never be able to meet the expectation of the dominant culture. He further said that the notion that it is the “White man’s burden” to christianize the marginalized religion, westernize their culture, democratize their government and capitalize their economy has been the main cause for much of the turmoil in the modern world.

Piketo Achumi (2012) in his book *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland 1881-1947* said that the missionaries saw conversion as a total about turn by the converts from their old ways of life. He argues that conversion was thus not enough and the new converts had to sever all connections with the rites and customs relating to the so-called pagan worship. The Nagas had to stop tribal folk songs, dances, sacrifices and celebrations related to cultivation, construction of houses, founding of villages, feast of merit, use of *morung* etc. According to him the abandoned animistic practices were replaced with new practices acceptable to Christian norms of life.

In the book *Traditional and Modern Political Institutions of the Nagas* by John H. Sema (2013) as he traces the origin, migration, emergence, power and functions of the Chiefs in Sumi tribes, mentions that with the conversion of the Sumi chiefs to Christianity the rules and regulations, customs and practices of the Sumi Nagas underwent considerable changes. He further added that despite the changes in the society with conversion to Christianity the traditional political institution i.e Chieftainship continues with fewer changes in it then more.

N.Talitemjen Jamir and A. Lanunungsang(2005) in their book *Naga Society and Culture (A Case Study of the Ao Naga Society and Culture)* while talking about the socio-cultural aspect ‘from tradition to modernity’ said that the socio-cultural aspect of the Aos have totally changed . They concluded that in the marriage system the family and clan exogamy

marriage remains unchanged however the Christian marriage system and procedures have replaced the traditional bound system of marriage.

In assessing the impact of Christianity in marriage system among the Angamis, Kikhi (2009) in his work *Changes and Continuity in Naga Marriage: Case Study of Zounuo-Keyhonuo Group of Angami-Naga* notes that the importance and significance of marriage have not been altered, and that though they have embraced Christianity, the present system is not totally Christian nor is it totally traditional.

The role of Christianity in Naga nationalism is highlighted in Chara's (2018) article in *Naga Nationalism's Dilemma over Meanings, Politics and Religion* that the Naga self discovery, as a modern organism, can be attributed to the new culture associated with the new religion, Christianity, either in the form of acceptance or resistance. That it was not that Nagas were not aware of their identity before Christianity arrived, brought with colonialism, but that the concept of solidarity, oneness and modernity began to be conceptualized only after interaction with the new religion. Longkumer's (2019) also writes in '*Along Kingdom's Highway': the proliferation of Christianity, education, and print amongst the Nagas in Northeast India* that the adoption of Christianity accentuated a pan-Naga identity that was increasingly related to territoriality and religion. Further he adds that the slogan 'Nagaland for Christ' adopted by different nationalist groups such as the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) from the 1970s onwards, alongside the Naga Baptist churches, suggesting that the activities of the church reverberated into contemporary Naga nationalism.

In *Nagas in the 21st Century* Iliyana Angelova (2019) argues that the biggest agent of socio-cultural change in the lands of the Nagas were the American Baptist missionaries who established their first permanent mission stations in the lands of the Naga, and initiated the process of Naga conversions to Baptist Christianity. She further states that as conversion rates

gradually increased the Naga began to articulate their identities in Baptist Christian terms and started losing many aspects of traditional Naga culture of prominence and symbolic value. She also states that while Christian conversions have affected a number of changes and discontinuities in the socio-cultural traditions, much more has remained as a substratum of cultural reproduction than conventionally acknowledged.

1.5. Statement of Problem

Christianity is considered to be a major factor in bringing about changes in indigenous societies worldwide. Scholarships on impact of Christianity in indigenous societies on various aspects from different parts of the world attest to this (Rambo 1993; Brock, 2005; Yengoyan, 2006; Dalal, 2011; Nwafor, 2016; Silva, 2018). Tribal communities of India likewise and especially of the North East region, and particularly the state of Nagaland, are noted to have experienced conversion to Christianity and consequently undergone revolutionary changes in their material culture, cultural beliefs and practices (Subba et al, 2006). However, unlike its global counterparts, what Sahay (1968) noted of its study in India decades back appear relevant as yet, more so in the context of Nagaland that, ‘the literature on tribal converts is inadequate, and what few data on the subject are available lack theoretical depth’.

Literature related to Christianity in Nagaland from mission and evangelical perspectives are plentiful, with the area of religious studies being more of a domain of the theological community for the longer period of time. Few social science studies with regard to impact of Christianity in Naga society such as on marriage (Kikhi, 2009), nationalism (Chara 2018), westernization (2009), education (2019) etc., are available. However, these are mostly in fragments in terms of coverage, as they are confined only to certain aspects; and in terms of quality, indepth- study based on ethnographic work are yet to be fulfilled.

A lot of questions related to theoretical orientations of identity, values, socialization, social structure, social organization and the complexities involved in the socio-cultural process of change with change of religion in the society are yet to be investigated and documented from sociological and anthropological perspectives. In the context of Nagaland conversion to Christianity historically called for a complete abandonment of traditional Naga culture and practices. The study, therefore, also attempts to explore whether there are continuities of the pre-Christian culture if so then in what forms it is found.

1.6. Objectives of the Study:

The following are the objectives of the study-

- To understand the interface of religion and culture of the traditional Naga society.
- To study the process of change of religion in Naga Society.
- To examine the socio-cultural impact of Christianity in Naga society.

1.7. Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were proposed for the study undertaken–

- Traditional socio-cultural life of the Nagas was deeply embedded in religious beliefs and practices.
- There is segregation between religious and secular life of the Nagas after the advent of Christianity.

1.8. The Universe of the Study:

The universe of the study is the Naga people of Nagaland. The state of Nagaland is inhabited by 17 major tribes - Angami, Ao Chang, Chakesang, Kachari, Khiamniungan, Konyak, Kuki, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Rongmei, Sangtam, Sumi , Yimchunger, Zeliang , as well as a number of sub- tribes (Lanunungsang & Ovung, 2012, p . 2). Presently,

87.92% (Census 2011)⁴ of its population practice Christianity. However, as studying the entire universe was not practically feasible considering the constraints of time and other resources besides the difficult geographical terrain of the state, four sample tribes i.e., Angami, Ao, Konyak and Sumi were selected for the study. These tribes were purposefully selected with due consideration because of their significant relation with Christianity in Naga history and, therefore, provide a comprehensive data for the study.

1.9. Methodology:

A detailed methodology was designed for the proposed research. The different components of methodology comprised of the following-

1.10. Sources of Data:

Relevant data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The respondents from the selected villages and towns in the study formed the primary sources. More emphasis was placed on the empirical data collected from primary sources through field visits and extensive interactions.

Secondary data was obtained through books, journals, magazines, newspapers, reports, official documents, internet sources and other relevant publication.

1.11. Sampling Procedure:

The multi-stage Purposive sampling method was followed for the present study. In the first stage four tribes were identified for the study. These tribes were purposefully selected with due consideration because of their significant relation with Christianity in Naga history and, therefore, provide a comprehensive data for the study. The Angami tribe was selected

⁴ <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/state/13-nagaland.html>

considering their relative late conversion in terms of their first encounter with the Christian missionaries. The Ao tribe was selected for being the pioneers of Christianity. Moreover the Angami and the Ao had/has a Republican form of polity where no autonomous chief ruled/rule the village. The Konyak tribe was chosen for their late but mass conversion they also share similar polity with the Sumis who practice hereditary Chieftainships. Significantly the Sumi tribe was selected for exhibiting a trait of mass conversion and being the second largest early Christian converts after the Aos.

The districts predominated by the four selected tribes for the study was, thereafter, identified. Accordingly, the sample districts selected were Mokokchung (Ao), Kohima (Angami), Mon (Konyak), and Zunheboto (Sumi). The next stage involved selection of the sample villages and town to represent both the rural and urban sample of the selected districts.

Accordingly, for the Angami tribe the villages included were Jakhama (representing Southern Angami, also the), Khonoma (representing Northern Angami), Dihoma (representing Western Angami) and Kohima town (representing the urban area). For, the Ao tribe the selected villages included Longkhum (for its close tie with traditions), Molungkimong-Molungyimsen (representing the earliest conversions to Christianity), Changki (for its crucial significance with Christianity) and the district headquarter Mokokchung town (representing its urban area). For the Konyak tribe the villages are Tamlu (the first converted Christian village among the Konyaks), Longwa (the biggest Konyak village and one which converted late), Shangnyu (for its immense content of traditional material culture). For the Sumi tribe the selected villages were Ighanumi (for being the village of the first converts for the Sumis), Lumami (representing

the *Ghabo*⁵ region of the Sumis), Satoi (representing the *Azho*⁶ region of the Sumi and interior villages) and Zunheboto town (representing the urban area).

Next, the Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) sampling method was employed, where a ratio of 1:10 respondents were targeted taking the total number of household as the total size from each village. As the population of the villages differed greatly with the smallest at 107 household (Satoi) to the largest with 953 household (Jakhama), in villages where the total number of households exceeded 500 a total number of 50 respondents were purposively targeted. Similarly, in the urban areas a total number of 50 respondents were targeted as respondents. Accordingly, approximately 663 respondents constituted the total sample size of interview schedule and questionnaire, with 463 respondents from villages (rural) and 200 respondents from towns (urban).

The respondents included both men and women, mostly from the older age group; the older age group was targeted as the older age group had closer link and knowledge of the Pre-Christian Naga beliefs, traditions and culture, moreover they were acquainted with Christianity too and hence were able to provide valuable information and insights. The youths were also included as they were targeted to provide information with regard to the influence of religion and the cultural values in contemporary times.

The rationale of the purposive sampling followed a pattern of targeting respondents incorporating varied categories such as age, gender, marital status and educational qualification as given in **Table 1.1**.

⁵ The Sumis refer to their inhabited areas as being divided into warmer and colder climate regions. The warmer climate region is referred to as *Ghabo* and colder climate region as *Azho*. "The terms *Ghabomi*(Hot-place-men) and *Azhomi* (Cold-place-men) are sometimes used for the inhabitants of the western low and hot villages and for those of the more eastern and colder villages respectively" J.H. Hutton (1968 :4).

⁶ The colder climate zone of Sumis.

Table 1.1: Profile of Respondents

Categories	Particulars	No. of Respondents
Gender	Female	317
	Male	346
Age	18-27	164
	28-37	137
	38-47	109
	48-57	101
	58-67	94
	68 and above	58
Educational Qualification	Below Matriculate	146
	Matriculate	132
	Higher Sec.	154
	Graduate and above	231
Marital Status	Unmarried	316
	Married	276
	Divorced	71

Accordingly, the research sample comprised 317 female respondents and 346 male respondents. In age category a total of 164 were in the age group of 18 - 27 years, 137 from age group 28-37, 109 from 38-47 years, 101 from 48-57 years, 94 from 58-67 years and 58 were from above 68 years of age. With regard to the marital status of the respondents, 276 were married, 316 unmarried and 71 respondents were divorced. With respect to the educational qualification, 146 respondents were below matriculate, 132 matriculate, 154 had qualified class 12 and 231 were graduate and above.

1.12. Tools of Data Collection:

The techniques for the data collection included a combination of in-depth Interview, Interview Schedule, Questionnaire method, Focus Group Discussion, Case study and Participant Observation as well. Due to the lack of higher educational institutions in rural areas most of the respondents from rural areas had limited educational qualification, and hence interview method was used. Likewise in villages key informants/respondents were identified for interview; these were related to information for pre Christian traditions and culture hence the older generation was targeted, case study for gathering information contemporary marriage, birth and death rituals were targeted through purposive selection of household. Besides, Focused Group Discussions were also conducted in the villages. For respondents from the urban areas questionnaire method was suitably utilized.

Case study in relevant situation formed part of in depth data collection providing immense information to the study. Case study of persons who had converted to Christianity was undertaken providing up-close, in-depth and detailed examination of the subject. Besides case study of marriage, birth and death rituals related to both traditional and Christian custom were collected.

Besides, Church officials of different churches were also interviewed to gather information related to the role of church in the society and to study the social structure of the church.

Participant observation also formed part of this study's data collection for observing social realities in their own environment.

1.13. Data Analysis:

The data collected from the field through interview, interview schedule, questionnaire and case study were scrutinized for validity and completeness of the information. Tabulation and transcription were done where necessary which was followed by interpretation and analysis of data with illustrations and figures wherever necessary. Consequently, analysis of data from the field was corroborated with established theoretical work to arrive at sociologically valid conclusions.

1.14. Organization of the Thesis:

The thesis is presented in six (6) chapters including Introduction and Conclusion. Chapter one contains the introductory statement, conceptual framework, literature review, objectives, hypotheses, area of study and methodology of the study.

In chapter two besides the beliefs and practices; social institutions and cultural life of the traditional Naga society are discussed.

The history of Christian movement to Nagaland, with focus on conversion narratives in understanding the process and dynamics of conversion in Naga society, are dealt with in chapter three.

Chapter four covers the social and cultural life of the Nagas after coming of Christianity. The theoretical and conceptual spirit in this chapter is implemented adopting a two dimensional approach i.e. juxtaposing the concepts of social-cultural changes involved in socio-cultural processes and by applying the theories of religion with special reference to Christianity.

Chapter five contains the study on religious identity, practice of religious values and orientations in everyday life of contemporary Christian Nagas.

In chapter six the summary of the preceding chapters are given and findings of the study are discussed with relevant theoretical literature.

CHAPTER TWO

TRADITIONAL NAGA SOCIETY, RELIGION AND CULTURE

Religion is not merely a doctrine or a philosophy, not merely an intellectual body of opinion, but a special mode of behaviour, a pragmatic attitude built up of reason, feeling, and will alike. It is a mode of action as well as a system of belief, and a sociological phenomenon as well as personal experience (Malinowski, 1948, p.1).

Even if they were not Christians our ancestors led virtuous lives (Rev. Imna Tzudir ¹).

2.1. Introduction

Religion persists in the social world concerned not only with the supernatural but with influential attachment to the values, behaviours, interactions, activities and aspirations of its adherents. In most societies it plays a significant role in maintaining order, providing cohesion and socializing the members of a social group. There are many different religions practiced in human society. Each religion has moral ethos and a system of ethics which guides and motivates its members. Religion is considered to be an integral part of culture, exerting its influence in manners of eating, dressings and the way people define their everyday life. For many people religion provides the meaning of their existence, their purpose and place in society.

The close relation of religion and culture in simple homogenous societies are inarguable; in such societies religious beliefs are so interwoven with socio- cultural practices that it is not possible to speak of religion per se without including its cultural aspects or to study the culture of such a society without understanding the religious beliefs and practices inherent in it. Most societies, Berger & Berger (1976, p.29) noted, have a history where religion was

¹ Interviewed on 1st December 2019, Changki Village.

the main source which provided principal legitimations for the maintenance of their society. Societies where behaviours are regulated by religion and adherence to it becomes a moral and lawful obligation have individuals going through their everyday life being directed by religion. In the words of Weber (cited in Bendix, 2016, pp. 272-273) "... psychological impulses which originated in religious belief and practice of religion, gave direction to the individual's everyday way of life and prompted him to adhere to it". Hence, individuals are guided through their everyday life with the consciousness conditioning by their religion of what is permissible or non-permissible, what is sacred and what is profane. On the other hand, the ability of religion to influence the everyday life of individuals is because of the meanings that individuals are able to associate with their established beliefs and institutions (Weber cited in Bendix, 2016, pp. 266-267). Therefore, it is the meanings that people associate with their established beliefs and institutions that become crucial areas of focus for understanding the convergence of religion and culture of a society.

This chapter seeks to understand the interface between religion, culture and society of traditional Naga society. Effort is made here to find if religion was closely inter-wined with the socio-cultural life or whether affairs of the religious were segregated from their everyday life. Likewise, the religious beliefs and practices is analyzed and important socio-cultural aspects of the traditional Naga society such as their social structure, life cycles, dormitory system, dress and ornaments, and festivals are examined to understand the religious meanings attached to them in order to establish the role of religion in traditional Naga society.

2.1.1. Defining Indigenous Religion

In the nineteenth- century the anthropology of religion became preoccupied with the origin of religion specially influenced by Taylor's (1817) theory on evolution of religion where he conceived animism as the base of all religion. The idea that, 'primitive' societies and their

belief systems and practices would shed light to how the ‘refined’ religions eventually evolved prompted Western scholarships on ‘primitive’ society and religion such as Durkheim’s *The Elementary Forms Of Religious Life* (1912), Malinowski’s *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), Pritchard’s *Theories of Primitive Religion* (1965) and a host of essays and addresses of Radcliffe-Brown (1964)² studying religion of the ‘primitives’. These efforts of the studies/ and in the process of studies an unmistakable attitude of the Westerners began to emerge as they began carrying an implicit cultural model of their ‘religion’ with them even as they encountered others (McGuire, 2012, p.114). Two categories of religious traditions thus became differentiated- one which was considered of ‘virtuoso’ religiosity related to sacred objectives such as holiness, spiritual blessings, and salvation and the other as ‘popular’ religiosity which was considered profane and related to people’s pragmatic daily needs. The former (linked with the social and religious elites) as McGuire (2012) observed became established as ‘official’ religion which were prescribed, regulated, and socialized by organized religious groups and the later (related to uneducated and superstitious masses) as ‘nonofficial’ religion characterized by unorganized, inconsistent, heterogeneous beliefs and practices and a distinct absence of religious specialists composing a separate organizational framework . According to McGuire (2012, p. 115), the establishment of “official” religion by definition began excluding “people’s” religion which includes the religious expressions characteristic of indigenous peoples in colonized lands.

The religion of indigenous people were considered to be spiritually/morally inferior to the ‘Western’ belief and practice which became more evident in colonial regions and religiously inferior connotations such as animism, totemism, fetishism, primitive, pagan,

² These were compiled and published in the form of a book *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (1964).

heathen, savage, archaic etc were unabashedly put to print by the practitioners of ‘superior’ religion in reference to the indigenous people and their religions.

The ethnocentric views of ‘defining religion’ through the western lens were left uncriticised in the academia for a long time until in the twentieth century attentions were drawn to how these terminologies were having a denigrating effect on the cultures (of the indigenous peoples) instead of describing it (Harvey 2006 cited in Cox, 2007, p.3). Turner (1977, p.27) noting the religions of tribal societies out-rightly rejected the use of ‘Primitive’ and stressed that connotations such as ‘animist’ ‘ethnic’ ‘pre-literate’ ‘non-historical’ ‘traditional’ and ‘archaic’ are misleadingly, inaccurate and offensive to describe religious traditions of people and called for a term which should, according to the first principles in religious studies, be one acceptable by the people described.

Turner (1997, p.28) proposed the term *primal* which was derived from various cognate words such as primeval, primordial and primary be applied to religion that have been left outside the so-called ‘World Religions’; he justified that the term conveys the ideas that such religions presents the most basic or fundamental religious forms in the overall religious history of mankind and that they have preceded and contributed to the other great religious systems. However , Cox (2007, p.2) argued *primal* was scientifically unwarranted and aided the missionary theory that the ‘primal’ worldview provides a base on which all world religions are built and, in the case of Christianity, anticipates the fullness of the message of Jesus Christ . Instead Cox (1996 cited in Cox 2007, p.27) suggested that the term ‘primal religions’ be replaced with ‘the religions of indigenous peoples’. To guarantee the empiricism with the use of this phrase he further suggests the use of ‘geographical, ethnic and linguistic qualifiers’ where possible. By then, academic publications had begun discarding the terminologies used earlier and began describing religious expressions of indigenous people with their own faculty such as Native American Religions (Fletcher et al 2002), Indigenous Religions (Harvey

2002), and Indigenous People and Religion (Brock 2005). Indigenous according to Brock (2005, pp. 270-271) means originating in or native to a region, and 'Indigenous People' is a form of self-identification for many people, in this sense the nomenclature 'Indigenous Religion' fulfils the empirical understanding of a religion originating in a region and more significantly identifies the religion of a people with its own value and essence and has therefore found more appeal. Cox (2007, p.30) further points out that the development of new academic programmes and publications related to Indigenous Religions, supports the contention that 'Indigenous' now has overtaken 'Primal' as the preferred designation among religious studies scholars.

2.1.2. Deconstructing Naga Belief System

The pre-Christian belief system of the Nagas was tagged as 'animism' during the colonial rule. British Government of India instructed the official administrators including ethnographers to describe the religion of the tribal/indigenous communities as 'animism' and directed to use the terminology in the Census of India (1901).³ Animism according to Tylor (1817) was the most rudimentary form of religion and defined as a "belief in Spiritual Beings". Animism occupied the lowest rung in the ladder of the evolution of religion while monotheism was positioned at the top. The Tylorian influenced categorization of a higher religion and a lower religion became an instrumental tool for Imperial Britain to use Christianity, a higher religion, for their colonial expansion.⁴ Achumi (2012, p.67) notes that the Colonial powers acknowledged the role and need of Christian missionaries as an effective agency in expanding the British Empire; hence, besides the lack of proper understanding, apathy and the ethnocentric attitude towards the religions of Nagas, the ulterior motive of the British

³ Kamei 2019 , *The Sangai Express* webcasted on 18th April 2005

⁴ Note

Piketo (2012:67) writes "Christianity, popularly known as the religion of imperial Britain was closely interlinked with colonialism both in Africa and Asia....Both in Asia and Africa the British introduced Christianity along with their territorial expansion".

Government of categorising the religions of Nagas as ‘animism’ appears to be a scheme for preparing the ground to influence the western Christian missionaries to propagate the ‘higher religion’ in the then Naga Hills which would in turn strengthen the colonial power.

The colonial monographs on Nagas that followed British administration *The Sema Nagas* (Hutton 1968), *The Ao Nagas* (Mills 2003) , *The Angami Nagas* (Hutton 1921), considered classics now on Naga History, all viewed the religions of the Nagas through ‘animistic’ lens. The indigenous scholarly reproduction (Kath, 2005; Shikhu, 2007; Kath & Thong, 2011; Sema, 2013; Nienu,2015) of references to the Naga religions as ‘animism’ without challenging the error/aptness of its application has only continued to uphold the colonial legacy of it, and promotes the nomenclature to be used abundantly in literature and everyday parlance as well.

A few variant on the use of other nomenclature of the religions of Nagas and not animism are noticed in the works of some. Here, we proceed to examine their application and their validation. Imchen (1993, p.8) came out with a strong condemnation against terming the Ao Naga religion as animism and arguing that even the Biblical religion has animistic elements but do not fall under the category of animism; he asserted that the religion of the ancient people was the prime factor of all modern religions and likewise proposed that it was most relevant to use the word ‘primal ’to refer to the religion of ancient Naga religion as so. Longkumer and Moanungsang (2012) opined that the concept of religion seems to be preconditioned by popular western value system and tribal religion and culture are considered inferior on basis of material backwardness. Affirming that tribal people do not like to be called heathen, savage, primitive or superstitious and that words such as animistic, pre literature, traditional or ethnic are not accurate and taking a cue from Turner they preferred to call religion of the indigenous tribes as Primal religion, denoting a religion in existence prior to the universal religion and in this regard categorize the religion of Nagas as primal religion. The fallacy of primal has already been

discussed above therefore the argument shall not be repeated here save for the conclusion that primal do not suffice to term the religions of the Nagas.

Longchar (1995, p.12) advocated the concept of ‘tribal religion’ and pointed out that it was misleading to label the religion of tribals as animism or primitive. He had since, been a devout practitioner of the concept (Longchar, 1997; Longchar & Vashum, 1998; Longchar, 2015). However, Turner (1997, p.27) had already identified the complication in applying the concept of tribal religion universally, he had said thus “‘Tribal’ may be acceptable to North American Indians and others but is quite unacceptable now in Africa and we need one term for use anywhere in the world.”

Alternate terminology used for the religions of Nagas was ‘Traditional religion’. One finds in Nshoga’s (2009, p.193) articulation wherein he had decried that anthropologists, sociologists and Christian missionaries had branded the ‘traditional Naga religion’ as ‘Heathenism’, “Infidelist’ and ‘Animism’ and confounded the application. A recent work *The Hornbill Spirit* by Abraham Lotha (2016), and the most latest work *Constructing the Divine* by Kanato Chophy (2019), both refers to the Naga religions as ‘Traditional Religion’. This categorization is further complicated when understood that ‘traditional’ is not a distinguishing term since all religions are traditional in practice and in the context of certain societies such as in Africa, Christianity and Islam are just as traditional (Turner, 1997, p.28).

The alternate nomenclatures used for referring to the religions of Nagas are still falling short. Therefore, bringing up Cox’s conclusion that ‘indigenous’ is now the academia’s recognised category of the religion of the indigenous people, the Naga religions are proposed to be categorized as Naga Indigenous Religions (NIR). The plural form is proposed in accepting that each tribe practised their independent religion, despite only slight variations in their core beliefs and practices. Similarly for empirical precision when dealing with different tribes,

specification may be included such as Ao Naga Indigenous Religion, Angami Naga Indigenous Religion, Konyak Naga Indigenous Religion or Sumi Naga Indigenous Religion as such.

The use of the concept of 'Naga Indigenous Religion' has been hinted in a book titled *The Phom Naga Indigenous Religion* by Henshet Phom (2015), however apart from the appellation the author has not argued why he disapprove of the earlier categories nor has he elaborated on the validation of the new terminology he used. Hence, an attempt is made here to substantiate that Naga Religions falls under the category of 'Indigenous' and for that a reference to Cox's (2007) on indigenous religion is cited:

In the writing of various scholars on this topic, the application of an inductive scientific method for classifying the characteristics of an 'indigenous' religion seems consistently to produce a list, which at a minimum, comprises the following three features : (1) indigenous societies are local, or at least self contained, and thus have no interest in extending their religious beliefs and practices beyond their own limited environment; (2) they are based primarily on kinship relations and usually have a strong emphasis on ancestors; (3) they transmit their traditions orally, resulting in a fundamentally different attitude towards beliefs and practices than is found amongst traditions derived from and based on authoritative written sources (p.61).

The Naga Indigenous Religions were local with each tribe and village having their own localised belief system and practices and were not prone to extending their beliefs outside their locality, secondly the eldest male in the clan or family was often the religious head taking charge of performing many clan or family rituals; ancestors were revered and clans/tribes

shared common mythical descent. Lastly, beliefs and practices of the Nagas were transmitted orally and experienced by individuals in the context of communal life and nature (Thong, 2009, p. 251). In this context the religions of the Nagas qualifies as an indigenous religion characteristically.

2.2. The Naga Indigenous Religions: Beliefs and Practices

Durkheim (1915,p.37) postulates that “All known religious beliefs, whether simple or complex, present one common characteristics: they presuppose a classification of all the things, real and ideal, of which men think, into two classes or opposed groups, generally designated by two distinct terms which are translated well enough by the words *profane and sacred* . This division of the world into two domains, is the distinctive trait of religious thought; the belief, myths, dogmas and legends are either representations or systems of representations which express the nature of sacred things, the virtues and powers which are attributed to them, or their relations with each other and with profane things.”

According to J.M.C. (1929, p.34) religion contains three elements – an intellectual one, an emotional one and a volitional one. The intellectual side both imply or include a faith or belief, a philosophy or science though it may be vague, crude, in-consistent or it may be very clear-cut, refined and logical. The emotional aspect refers to the certain awe, reverence, fear or affection towards the supernatural beings and the volitional side include the practical or co-native attitude towards the supernatural.

The Naga Indigenous Religions like all religion has its intellectual, emotional and volitional elements. Though slight variations persist amongst the vast number of differently spoken villages and tribes, the core aspects of the religious system ran along the same veins. The most significant aspects of its beliefs and practices are discussed as follows:

2.2.1. Supernatural Beings in the Naga Pantheon

The intellectual or the cognitive aspect i.e., the religious belief shapes the worldview of its adherents. It influences individuals to make choices, interpret events, and plan actions; functioning as the source of morality and producing values, norms and attitudes from it (McGuire, 2012, p.17).

At the heart of the Naga beliefs is the acknowledgement of the existence of the supernatural beings and their influence in their lives and their world (Chophy, 2019, p.26). Spiro and D'Andrade (1958, p.456) says 'conceptions of supernatural beings correspond to and are projections of the child's parental (or parent surrogate) imagos', here supernatural beings are understood as cultural conceptions which are passed on through socialization of a child.

J.M.C. (1929, p.34) classified supernatural beings into four major classes based on supplication and propitiation – "Ghosts, or beings who once lived on earth as human beings; spirits or lesser beings who were never men; gods, that is ghosts or spirits who enjoy a certain marked eminence among their supernatural fellows; the Supreme Being, God, who stands alone and supreme, or a near- Supreme Being, who easily ranks first and foremost in the supernatural world." In the Naga worldview the following classes of supernatural beings were prevalent.

a) The Supreme Deity

In the Naga context, the categorization of the supernatural differed among the tribes with regard to the Supreme Deity and the concept of the creator. The Sumi called their creator *Alhou* (*Lho* means create in Sumi dialect) who was regarded as the Supreme Being but remained far from their visible space and did not interfere in their everyday life. The Sumi God was a *dues incertus* and a *dues remotes*, i.e., an unknown being who remained far away and uninvolved with day to day human details (Cox, 2007, p. 19). The Konyaks revered their

Supreme God as *Kahwang*. Haimendorf (1968, p.112) writing about the Konyak Nagas recorded *Gawang* as the god of heaven the Konyaks of Tamlu called him as *Abuhahwang*⁵ (which translates as grandfather) who was believed to reside above the ground i.e., in the sky (the terminology probably differed due to the fact that each Konyak village speaks a different dialect). In both cases the Supreme Being denotes a single male deity. In Angami and Ao beliefs, the presence of a single male deity was absent; the Angamis refer to *Ukekenopfii* as the creator of the world whose name was derived from the root word *kepenopfii* which means ‘birth spirit’ (Mathur, 1992, p.126). Eaton (1984, p.41) referred to *Ukepenopfu* as the Angami female supreme deity and mentioned that the ending ‘*pfu*’ was a feminine ending and hence *Ukepenopfu* was feminine and that Angamis regard her as the ancestress of the human race. The Ao’s refer to *Lichaba*, according to Jamir and Lanunungsang (2005, p.153) the literal meaning of *Li* or *ali* is earth and *cha* or *aja*’ is to call or caller. Bendangangshi and Aier (1997, p.25) spelt it as ‘*Lijaba*’ and noted that he was one of the most important gods and that he was a creator, sustainer and controller of the earth. They identified the names of different Ao gods as ‘*Kodaktsungba, Anungtsungba, Longkitsungba, Longditsungba, Meyutsungba, Teroktsungba and Lijaba*’ arguing that ‘the many names of gods were addressed as one and their names were interchangeably used in different occasions’ (p. 29). According to them the different names were identified according to the different works performed otherwise all the gods of the Ao Nagas were the same. According to Ao (1984, p.7) among the Aos ‘*Tsungrem*’ denoted the great deity of the sky and was personally called as ‘*Aning Tsungba*’ (Lord of sky) who influenced weather and seasons while ‘*Lijaba*’ was the great deity of the earth who created the earth. They were considered the two most powerful deities and others were considered to be as less powerful and less important. Chophy (2018, p.2) recognized that ‘*Lijaba*’ (the deity in the earthly realm) belonged to the class of major deities along-with ‘*Lunkijjingba*’ (the chief

⁵ Interview with Rev Mankap on 7th December 2019 at Tamlu village

of heaven) and ‘*Mojing*’ (the chief in the realm of the dead). Hence, *Lijaba* was the creator of earth but not a ‘Supreme Being, God, who stood alone and supreme, or a near- Supreme Being, who easily ranked first and foremost in the supernatural world’ (J.M.C., 1929).

Viviers and Mzondi (2006, p.3) postulate Armstrong’s contemplation of the dawn of history where people possibly worshipped a ‘supreme deity/sky god/ high god’ who was perceived as creator of the world and governor of human affairs. The sky god deemed too remote were in time replaced by spirits and gods considered more accessible, among them the construction of a female deity, known as the ‘Great Mother’ materialized. They concluded that the construction of goddesses may follow the feminist experience of replacing the hegemony of patriarchy and that in history there is no single, essentialist/dogmatic construct of god as people conceptualise new ideas of god as they find themselves in new situations in their search for meaning.

Though the Sumi Supreme Deity was *dues incertus* and *dues remotes* he was not replaced by other gods and spirits instead there was a coexistence of the Supreme Being and the other gods/spirits in the Sumi pantheon. The Supreme Being of the Konyak on the other hand was closely involved in the everyday life of the Konyaks who meted out punishment to wrong doers and constantly consulted for His will for providence, prosperity and protection in the individual and communal life. The Supreme Deity in the Sumi and Konyak belief projects a ‘Patriarch’ figure whose relation with the people, though distant in the case of the Sumi, was yet unmistakably, one that was of a benevolent figure who expected obedience and endowed with the power to bless in return.

The Aos spoke of no single Supreme deity but had a number of gods assigned with certain functions and powers, and it is hard to say whether they replaced the Supreme Being following Armstrong’s (cited in Viviers & Mzondi, 2006, p.3) theory when they are claimed

to be the same deity in different forms (Bendangangshi & Aier, 1997, p.40). To further probe into it, a reference to an Ao myth may be pursued - the Ao Nagas narrates that man, god, bear and tiger all lived together as brothers of a family and cultivated the field together; a quarrel separated them one day and the man was left alone to cultivate the field where he continued to live fighting his brothers the bear and the tiger and offering worship and sacrifice to his brother, the god.⁶ God then in this form do not represent a Supreme Being but appears to have been related to man as a brother. From this myth, the concept of Supreme Being appears to be absent in the Ao Naga cosmology and evidently the idea of replacement therefore cannot be applied here. An entry by Haimendorf (1968, p.60) talks of the Ao belief of *Lichaba* as a creator of earth and *Lunkizunba* as the creator of men. Evidently the concept of a Supreme Being (a single theistic deity) was not conceived in the Ao belief. As for the feminist theory of understanding the 'birth mother spirit' in the Angami beliefs, a reading of Yano & Pande (2012), Mehrotra (1992) and Zetsuvi (2014) would nullify any attempt of it, as feminism or even the waft of it clearly had not influenced the Angami women to help assert their equality in socio-religious life let alone lead to their reconstruction of a 'deity' at that period of time. Moreover, the Angami belief in a female birth mother was stripped of the projection of revering a female deity by categorizing her as a spirit and not one of anthropomorphism. The Angamis at present refer to *Ukekepenopfii* as a 'genderless' spirit.

It maybe noted that for the Sumi and Konyak, they follow a polity of Chieftainship where the office is inherited through the patrilineal lineage wherein a Supreme Chief (*Akukatou*) of a village in the context of the Sumis and the Supreme Chief (*Ahng*) of many villages among Konyaks is practiced. Here, power is centralised in the hand of a single male chief though there may be minor chiefs/ahngs; there is a head chief in a Sumi village with other subordinate chiefs and an *Ahng* of the Konyak Nagas who administers over other villages each

⁶ Narrated by Bendangangshi, Co-Author of *The Religion of the Ao Nagas*, on 16th May 2016 at Ungma Village.

having its *Ahng*. Whereas, for Angamis and Aos they have a tradition of a republican form of polity where male representatives from clans (usually the eldest), held the office of administration for certain tenure. No other explanation suffices best, to explain other than referring to the difference in the political institutions followed by the mentioned tribes, to indicate the difference in the presence or absence of a Supreme Deity among the Nagas, where other beliefs and practices more or less run along the same veins and small variations presents no acute significance. Barman (2011, p.84) had noted that religion is the ideological reflex of the real world and its form is determined by the structure of that world, that gods and goddesses worshipped may differ from one group to another, based on the different socio-economic surrounding. In the Naga context, one may infer an inter-link between the indigenous socio-political system and the variations in the belief of the hierarchy of supernatural beings. The Sumi and Konyak tribes followed a patriarchal autocratic form of polity and was characterised by a patriarch supreme deity believed to be the creator of all beings. Whereas, correlating the republican but still patriarchal polity of the Aos and Angamis a plurality of gods were prevalent. The Aos, for instance, believed in a number of Gods and the creator was just one of those who enjoyed more or less the same power with the others but with different functions which parallels the practice of the Aos having no autocratic chief and power being exercised equally through the clan representatives, whereas the Angamis believed in a female birth mother who was considered the creator/ancestress designated only a spirit form, projecting that the ordinary (human) women were unrelated to the 'deity' and which in one way reflect the justification of the powerlessness of the ordinary women and on the other leaves no room for claim of influence by women in the patriarchal set up. The construction and hierarchy of the Supernatural with regard to the Supreme Deity and the Creator in the Naga cosmology hence reflected the power structure of their social life.

b) The Sky Spirits

Another category of Supernatural beings in the Naga cosmology were the beings believed to dwell in the sky. Chophy (2019, p.84) noting this category of deities to be endowed with physical bodies with human emotions and desires subsumed them to be classified as sprites or fairies dwelling in the sky, and having occasional interaction with earthly beings.

The Sumi called them *Kungumi* (meaning the ones who dwell above), The Aos called them *Kodaklar* and the Konyaks *Pinlan*. Bendangangshi and Aier (1997, p.29) mentions "...the class of heavenly beings called *Kodaklar or Kodaktsungrolar*The nearest meaning in English is angel and this class of heavenly beings lived with gods in heaven". Here, the use of 'heavenly being' is argued, because the concept of heaven was an influence of Christianity and in the pre- Christian times though beliefs of supernatural beings dwelling in the sky prevailed, and the Nagas believed in a place where they go after dying, 'heaven' as such was never defined. Noting that this category was neither human nor were they gods but of a lesser being; they fall under the realm of spirit in J.M.C.'s (1929) categorization of supernatural. Whereas, the nomenclatures sprites or fairies as identified by Chophy (2019) is debatable going by its literal meaning, i.e., sprite , *The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English*(Hornby,1987) explains is 'elf or fairy' . Elf further is given as "mythical dwarfish being" and fairy as "small imaginary being with magical powers"– they are therefore defined by their smallness in size. The fact that these spirits had encounters with the humans which led to love affairs and even marriages suggests that physically they were compatible with the humans. Nagas in choosing their life partner gives due importance to physical features and abilities, as such, deformities or irregularities in heights would not have found favour for them to pursue love affairs/ marriage. Thus, to categorize them as 'sprites' or 'fairies', is not, very apt. It is more apt to term them as 'sky spirits' and not as a heavenly being in the context of

Naga Indigenous Religions. The sky spirits were not always confined to the sky though. They occasionally wandered down to earth and had accidental encounters with humans.

Narratives about the sky dwellers speak mostly of them as females and renowned for their beauty, and the occasional interactions with humans sometimes even led to marriage after which they started residing in the human world. However, it appears the sky dwellers were not all females as an Ao narrative speaks of *Anung Kodaker* (a male sky spirit) who wanted to marry a girl from Ungma village (Bendangangshi & Aier, 1997, p.36). According to the legend, after much persuasion the girl and her family agreed to his proposal and preparations began for the marriage whereupon the girl was to be taken away to live with the groom in the sky. Unfortunately, the brother of the intending bride was accidentally killed by one of the sky dwellers upon arrival for the marriage, which led to dissolution of the intended marriage and the groom left in anger and disappointment, cursing the family and vowing to take away his bride though not physically. Shortly thereafter the girl died and their family and clan ever since that day had failed to produce a good leader or rich men.⁷ What can be deduced from this narrative is that sky spirits were not all females; this is also complemented by the fact that the Sumi terminology for sky dwellers is *Kungumi* which is a general category and not gender specific. Secondly, the sky spirits were believed to be capable of causing harm to the humans. They however do not appear to be ill disposed towards the humans in general resorting to harm only in unawareness or in retaliation.

To this category of supernatural beings no rituals, sacrifices or offerings were directed. The relation between the human and the sky spirits do not reflect one of reverence and compensation and the Sky Dwellers do not characterise as compensators (Stark & Bainbridge, 1987, p. 39). The interaction of the human and sky spirits reveals two world constructs- one of

⁷ Interview with Bendangangshi, co-author of the book *The Religion of the Ao Nagas* (1997), 16th May 2019, at Ungma Village.

the human world and the other of the supernatural with interaction between humans and the sky spirits taking place in the everyday space of the human beings. Incidentally, when a human girl married a male sky spirit she was expected to be taken away to the sky spirit's home whereas when a male human was able to woo a female sky spirit to be his wife she resided with him in his home. The patrilocal tradition of the Nagas appears distinctive even in their encounter with the supernatural reflecting a social structure that permeated supernatural relationships.

c) Propitiatory Gods

Men take two major attitudes towards the supernatural – the attitude of persuasion, petition or propitiation, and the attitude of coercion, constraint or compulsion (J.M.C., 1929, p.1). A belief in a supernatural and the attitude towards it is determined by the belief in its power. Amongst the deities in the Naga pantheon the most significant ones towards whom the act of propitiation was often directed were the spirits who inhabited their everyday living space. The Angamis called them *Terhuomia* , the Aos *Tsungrem* , the Konyaks *Yaha* and the Sumi called them *Tughami* or *Aghau*. These were gods of their fields, their houses, their hills, their forests, their graveyards, rivers, lakes, pathways and so on. These gods influenced their surroundings and intervened in the human affairs. The tendencies of the gods were held to be such that when appeased or appropriated they brought blessings otherwise they brought destruction or other misfortunes. Hence, the gods were believed to be both benevolent and malevolent and had the authority to bless, protect or destroy in accordance to the treatment/reverence meted out to them. This belief in turn initiated a plethora of enactment of rituals, observance of taboos, and offerings of sacrifices related to all aspects of the Naga traditional society.

d) Ancestral Spirits

The ancestral spirits were recognized and given due reverence in the Naga eschatology. They believed that the dead were aware of what was taking place in the physical world and were concerned with the care of their properties (Mills 2003). The ancestral spirits while at one hand were invoked at certain ceremonies and rituals for blessings, on the other hand their visible appearances were regarded as omens of tragedies. They were also believed to be capable of bringing sickness to the living and of possessing ability to take away souls of the living. Among the Sumi it was believed that when a significant man such as a chief dies he takes away with him a companion, i.e. another man dies soon after the chief dies.

Khongliam (2012,p.36) had argued that in Khasi religion the concept of immortality of human soul has given reason for the Khasi people to respect the souls of departed relatives or parents; however such an act was not worship but only venerating them. Ahuja (1965) noted that Bhils believe in ghosts based on the belief that there is a soul in the body which has a separate existence; if there is a disease or illness in the family they associate it with the wrath of the spirit of the dead person and to nullify its effect and to propitiate the spirit, prayers or sacrifices are offered or its idol is installed. Similarly in Naga beliefs the belief in soul and its continuity after its physical life expires was related to belief in ancestral spirits and on important events they are remembered with symbolic rituals; however unlike the Bhils they do not link all their ill health to their ancestral spirits, only certain peculiar illness⁸ are associated with them.

The belief in ancestral spirits signifies the continuation of family relationship even after death. The dead continued to live in the memories of the living and these memories were

⁸ For instance among the Sumi it was believed that before the wedding day if a parent/parents of the marrying couple was/were deceased a ritual feast remembering them was to be observed if it was not, during the marriage feast when the guests partake in the food it causes them loose motion.

expressed/ displayed through rituals on important life events thus influencing the legacy of lineages more prominently. Social relations are therefore seen as being extended even after the end of physical life.

2.2.2. Belief in Soul and Afterlife

The Nagas believed the soul existed attached to their physical body, and upon death the soul was believed to leave the body and go to the land of the dead. About the Sumi concept of soul Chophy (2019) writes “In the traditional religion, the dichotomy of the body (*aphimphi*) and soul (*aghungu*) was identifiedA soul (*aghungu*) becomes a ghost (*kithimi*) if it permanently leaves the human body, and departs for the land of the dead (*kithilato*)for the Sumi, death is understood as body devoid of soul”. In general amongst all the tribe the separation of the soul from the body was not limited to one’s death; in fact the soul could separate from a living body as well. It was believed that when a soul detached itself from a body the physical body fell sick and if the soul was not retrieved back to its physical being, the person died. Such instances happened while in the wild or mostly amongst children when they were frightened suddenly. The belief was that if the soul was not retrieved in such cases, it results in death.

In the Naga eschatology not every soul was destined for the same place. Based on the deeds during their lifetime the destiny for their eternal life was determined. When a person died the soul was believed to journey across the pathway of the dead. The soul was then judged at the threshold among the Aos by *Meyutsungba* , among the Konyaks by *Dolonyu*- believed to be the Supreme judges. Thereafter, as per the belief of the Aos, the righteous entered into *Tipuli* (land of dead) to be with *Meyutsungba* while the Konyak speak of *Yimching* as the land of the dead. The Sumi believed that from *Kithilato* the soul passes into the other world (Aye 1997) where the righteous go to *Kungu* (understood as a place above probably meaning in the sky)

whereas the unrighteous goes to *ghuyi* (a place believed to be the abode of the unrighteous ones or those who died an unnatural death).

The earthly activities were believed to have an impact on the soul and the Afterlife; for instance the soul substance of the person who had performed the *Feasts of Merit* and erected a stone was believed to adhere to the menhir⁹ (Haimendorf, 2004, p. 25) moreover the souls of those who had sacrificed *mithun* (*bos frontalis*) and bulls with all righteousness and in accordance to the religious instructions were permitted to enter into 'eternal blest' (Bendangangshi & Aier, 1997, p. 44).

The concept of the soul and the Afterlife sustained the operation of morality and perpetuated the effort to attain ritual status, which was closely related to their social status, in their everyday life.

2.2.3. Rituals, Prayers and Sacrifices

If the belief in the supernatural was the heart of the Naga religion it was the rituals which sustained the beliefs; ritual aspect brought to light their behavioural and institutional practices (Chophy, 2019, p.114). The Nagas performed rituals for almost every aspect of their life - rituals were observed on establishment of village, on construction of house, agricultural rituals, life cycle rituals, rituals for prosperity, for health, for safety, festive rituals, in the face of natural calamities and many more. There were public rituals and private rituals. Public rituals were mainly performed by the village priest whereas rituals related to clan or household/family rituals were performed by the clan priest or the eldest male member. There were also rituals which were observed occasionally and those that were a part of their everyday life.

⁹ A menhir is described as a tall stone set up as a monument in prehistoric times (The Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary 2001, p. 526). In the Naga context stones the feast-giver (Feast of merit) was entitled to erect a stone for every feast given.

Rituals were often accompanied by prayers and offerings/sacrifices. Prayers were offered relative to the enactment of the ritual; these were pronounced by the chief actor engaging in the ritual which was most often a priest or the head of a family. The Ao Nagas observing a ritual on a new cultivation site would engage in pouring out the rice beer from a cup slowly while uttering *Ang, na tama jemang* (meaning Take this, you drink first) and continue saying *Oh Lord god, from today onwards we shall continue to come here, hence I pray, you save us from all eventuality, sickness and even headaches as we work here and bless us by bearing abundant harvest in our labour* (Bendangangshi & Aier, 1997, p. 54). The Nagas offered chicken/rooster, pigs, or *mithuns* (*Bos Frontalis*) as way of appeasing the supernatural and sought longevity and prosperity in return. Besides food and drinks were also regular forms of offerings. When a house was constructed tiny bundles of food were tied to the main pillar of the house as an offering to the house spirit. Offerings were however not limited to use of animals, food and drinks. In Ighanumi village for instance, oral narrative has it that ¹⁰ in the olden days the *Khagho* (Village Gate in Sumi) was a sacred space and as one passed through the gate a twig or leaf was plucked and offered to the spirit of the gate. One of the Naga sacrifices included the occasional offerings of the skulls of enemies gathered as war trophy.¹¹ Human heads were offered especially for replenishing the prosperity and fertility of the villages and in this context the offering of a human part symbolize not the erroneous understanding that the Naga people had no value of life but rather the value and sacredness they attach to a human life. A reference to Stark and Bainbridge (1996, p.83) exchange theory between humans and

¹⁰ Focus Group Discussion held in Ighanumi village on 24th November 2016

¹¹ In the olden days as Naga villages were often independent villages, wars were frequent between villages. The defeated villages often paid tributes to the superior villages and in some cases ceded their territories as they migrate to other areas in fear. The warriors in the villages enjoyed high social status and privileges. The war tactics of the Nagas involved raiding other villages often in groups, sometimes even an individual could slip into enemy territory and kill the enemy. Parts of the slain enemy were probably brought back as proof of the act. Human sacrifice was necessary on occasion of dedicating a boy's dormitory; a log drum or a new village. According to Konyak (2008, p.32) the magical powers to further fertility was believed to lay in the human head. Hence, the head of the slain enemies became valuable war trophies.

gods can be made here, where the desire of gods resemble the desires of humans and thus the common value for human life, which impels the humans to involve in ‘high exchange ratio’ giving the greatest of their resources i.e., human life to the gods in exchange for greater rewards.

The items of offerings such as cattle, food and drinks, all essential and valuable commodities in an agriculturalist economy symbolize the economic input of a greater return. Such acts resonates with the exchange theory of Stark and Bainbridge (1987) with regard to the supernatural and humans ‘that men gave a little of what they value to the Gods in expectation of something greater’.

2.2.4. Taboo

Every religion has its values and ideals, some forms of avoidances and some forms of requirements. Most religion is again generally accepted to have its idea of what is *sacred* and what is *profane*; the Durkheimian (1915) ideal of what is *sacred* applied to things set apart and forbidden and *profane* to that which is not so sacred. It is in context to what is restricted or forbidden that the concept of taboo¹² is identified, but whereas taboo refers to the forbidden it is closely associated with the sacred (Olson, 2015, p. 246).

The *modus operandi* of Naga religious practices was based on differentiating which was permitted and which was forbidden, with regard to all aspects of their life. Thus, “there are taboos against offending Gods, spirits, cutting sacred trees, against religious functions, failing to contribute to a sacrifice etc” (Kath, 2011, p.132). Taboo or forbidden was termed as *Kenna* in Angami, *Anempong* among the Ao’s, *Henbü* by the Konyaks and *Chini* among the Sumis. It was taboo for women to enter the men’s *morung* (dormitory), or to sit on the

¹² Note –

“Taboo refers to that which is forbidden. It can be traced to the Tongan language of Polynesian culture and the term *tapu*, or the Fijian word *tabu*, meaning prohibited, not allowed, or forbidden. It is closely associated with what is sacred and is surrounded by custom and law.” Carl Olson (2015, p. 246).

tehubas,¹³ there were also taboos related to marriage practices, birth and death. The Naga observance of taboo was related to fear of misfortunes in economic aspect, death, sickness and other hardships in life.

One important form of taboo the Nagas observed was the avoidance against working on certain days. The Angami observance of days when they were forbidden from venturing out or attending to everyday duties was called *penna*, the Ao's know it as *amang*, the Konyak *nyüopu* and the Sumi called it *pine*. The concept of *chini*, *pini* and *pine* all relates to taboo, and they overlaps sometimes in figure of speech. However they may be understood in this construct- certain practices which were not to be breached were termed as *Chini* (forbidden) for Sumis it is *Chini* to go to the fields while observing *Pine* (a ritual day) and *pini* was referred for act of observing *Pine*. Radcliffe-Brown's (1964) elaborated on the concept of taboo as "Anything – a material thing, a place, a word or name, an occasion or event, a day of the week or a period of the year – which is the object of a ritual avoidance or taboo can be said to have ritual value", hence the days on which the Nagas abstained from work because of ritual taboo may be called ritual days. Choppy (2019, p.67) while referring to *pini* observed that "The concept does not merely imply prohibitions but also involves a state of mind where the individual or the community involved in the ritual takes a break from the monotonous cycle of daily existence." During observance of certain ritual days by a household, such as those related to sickness or birthing of livestock, other people were restricted from visiting their house similarly the entire village when observing certain ritual days do not entertain visitors; no stranger was allowed to enter the village nor were its inhabitants allowed to exit the village or to bring anything into the village from outside. Among the Ao Nagas of Longkhum village *Kitsungkulemba* was a one day ritual where if a particular household experienced tragedies,

¹³Tehuba is an Angami word for boy's dormitory (Medo,2017, p.42) it is also referred to the sitting area made of stones arranged in a circular way where important matters of the village were discussed by the menfolk.

such as sickness among the family members or the livestock, or in the event of crop destruction, the household placed the leaves (with its own branches) of the *Kinempungla* (*Rhamnus alaternus*) on the doorway or gate to show that they were observing *Kitsungkulemba*; upon seeing thus, no guest would visit them. A pig was slaughtered and before the sun set the members of the house closed all the doors and windows, cooked the meat and shared amongst them. From each part of the slain pig small pieces were wrapped in banana leaves which were placed inside a basket then hung on the main pillar/post which was in the centre of the house as an offering to the house spirit.¹⁴ Apart from other regular ritual days a village observed ritual days whenever there were unnatural deaths in the village or whenever there was destruction in the village by natural elements such as a house damaged by wind, or a tree near the village being blown down (Mills, 2003, p. 296) . Besides, ritual days were observed by concerned individual(s), family or clan at life events (marriage, birth, death) too. For the Sumis when a village chief died the entire village *pini* (the act of observing pine) for nearly a month.

Here, one finds the observance of ritual days augmenting the concept of an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’. Household ritual days demarcated the particular household and its members from the rest of the society; clan ritual day(s) such as one observed on death of its members or the ritual day(s) observed by the entire village identified the participants as one group and others as different where the participants/ insiders were able to renew their feelings of belonging and solidarity. The terminologies of select Naga ritual days are presented in the following table.

¹⁴Interview with Chutiba , 77 years old at Longkhum , 5th June 2016.

Table 2.1: Ritual Days of Nagas

Name of Tribe	Term for Ritual Day
Angami	<i>Penna/Penyie</i>
Ao	<i>Amung</i>
Konyak	<i>Nyüopu</i>
Sumi	<i>Pine</i>

2.2.5. Dreams, Omens and Divination

The Nagas had strong belief in their dreams such that for any major decisions they consulted their dreams. For establishing a village, for instance, apart from surveying the other essentials required for a good settlement such as the fertility of soil, the conducive environment, the water source and a defensive area, the deciding factor was usually the omens of the dream; if upon sleeping on the selected site the omens of the dreams were interpreted as portend the site was abandoned (Nshoga 2009). In the case of marriage the Angami Naga first consulted their dreams before going ahead with the marriage procedure. Similarly dreams were often interpreted related to health, death and success. While there were seers and professional dreamers (Hutton, 1921, p. 246) to consult for those seeking aid, individual dreams were equally regarded with much conviction. Likewise Pukho (93 years old)¹⁵ from Jakhama village narrated that he was married for 10 years but had no issue whereas he often had dreams of ‘carrying a gun’ which according to him signified a child; moreover his brother also dreamt of him carrying a gun and predicted that he will get children. He thus divorced his wife in 1963 and remarried in 1964 and went on to have (the predicted) three (3) children. Here, the action

¹⁵ Interviewed on 10th October 2019 , at Jakhama Village.

of the actor was clearly motivated by his belief in dreams. It may be noted that a child of a legitimate marriage was an asset to a family/clan because it ensured the expansion of the group; apart from being an additional member the child had prospects of marrying another clan and thus strengthening the alliance of clans through marriage. Moreover, having a child especially a male child secured the continuing lineage of a family/clan which affected a sense of confidence for the family and an underlying but unmistakable respect from others as a child was seen as a symbol of posterity (the probability of the child reaching heights of success in his adult made the others to be cautious).

Reading the signs of nature was another Naga way of foretelling the future. The Nagas divined by observing peculiarities in nature, such as when a halo surrounded the sun the Sumi as well as the Ao Nagas believed that it symbolized the impending death of an influential/significant man. For the Sumis of Ighanumi fortunes about hunting expeditions were divined by consulting seers, also when they meet certain people¹⁶ on the way they returned home instead because they believed the hunt would not be successful. The impending marriage life of a newly married couple was divined by observing the entrails of a chicken killed during the marriage ritual among the Aos.

Pritchard (1976) records about the Zande that the Azande do not always consult the poison oracle for every doubt and misfortune rather they consult oracles and witch-doctors with matters which affect their health, their more serious social and economic ventures (p.35). In case an oracle predicts any undertaking to result in disaster, they gave up their plans. Similarly consulting dreams, reading the omens or divination for the Nagas were related to their socio-economic ventures, and concern for their health; and intending undertakings were cancelled in case of telling- signs of any harmful indication or disaster.

¹⁶A person who was believed to have an evil mouth, such a person is identified when the bad words he says really takes effect. Group Discussion at Ighanumi Village 24th November 2016.

2.3. Social Structure

Human beings connect to each other through a complex network of social relations. Radcliffe-Brown (1964, p.190) used the term ‘social structure’ to denote such network of existing relations. According to him social structure composes of – (a) all social relations of person to person (which includes the kinship relation) and (b) all differentiation of individuals and of classes by their social role (such as the social positions of men and women, of chiefs and commoners). Forms of social structure are described by patterns of behaviour to which individuals and groups conform their dealings to one another. These patterns become formulated in rules and emerge distinguished as rules of etiquette, morals and laws. Status and roles, norms and values of society are determined by its social structure. The following section examines the different aspects of the traditional Naga society and culture:

2.3.1. Family, Clan and Kinship Structure

The Naga traditional family was preferably nuclear ones except rarely where aged parents lived with their married children. When a son married he set up his own house and began his family of procreation. In the traditional Naga family, the father, mother and the little children lived in the same house whereas the grown up unmarried sons and daughters slept in their separate dormitories though they partook the food in their parents’ home in the mornings and evenings.

Although the Nagas valued a bilateral kinship system whereby, in general, relatives of fathers and mothers were treated as equally important (Nienu, 2015, p.103) in terms of descent they followed the unilineal system and traced their descent through the father. The father was the head of the family and the legitimate authority in all important matters related to his household. When a father died the eldest son succeeded him. If the son was a minor his mother presided over domestic decisions but she had no authority in matters of properties, nor was her

role a necessity in the procedure of her children's marriage; in these matters it was the child/ren's paternal uncles who assumed the responsibilities.

Every Naga family was linked to a clan; a clan was an association of people of both sexes, membership of which was determined by unilineal descent tracing the members' descent to a common ancestor. The Naga clan members identified their clans with names which were of patrilineal descent. There was a clan leader usually the eldest (able) to represent the clan at large and to take decisions for the clan; even in the case of hereditary headship of the village like the Sumi and the Konyaks, the eldest capable male member of the clan heads the office. The clan leader was in short the head of the clan responsible for all matters related to the clan just as the father was responsible for the family. Every Naga village was a multi-clan village (though the numbers were never fixed or uniformed) which provided the regulation of strict clan exogamy (which was a characteristic of the Naga communities irrespective of clan, village or tribe). Clan members extended help to each during times of needs and played major role in the rites of passage of other clan members. There were also clan priests to perform the rituals related to the clans only. Certain clans such as the *Aye* clan among the Sumi and *Pongener* clan among the Jungli Ao were considered as priestly clans and tasked with the supply of priests. Certain clan also had its members refraining from consuming taboo foods such as dog meat by the *Kinimi* clan of Lumami while the *Longchar* clan of Ao tribe do not eat pork offal, and the *Ozukum* clan of the Aos refrain from consuming the hornbill. Such observances reaffirmed solidarity and the feeling of 'otherness' from other clans and at the same time evoked the 'we' feeling among themselves.

2.3.2. Priesthood

The basis of priestly existence and activity is communion with the divine, with the priest playing the mediating role between god and humans (Olson, 2015, p.191). In traditional Naga society the priests formed an integral part of the social structure. The organisation of the

priesthood was structured with the head of the family performing the family rituals and ceremonies, the clan priest performed the same for the clans and the village priest or the chief priest performed the rituals at the village level. Among the Angamis the village priest was a direct descendant of the village founder, while among the Aos the chief priest was chosen from one amongst the priestly clan, i.e., the Pongener clan. In the case of the Konyaks the priest like the Angamis was a descendant of the village- founder, the Sumis of Lumami had priests from the Aye clan. The Angami refer to their village priests as *Kemevo/Tevo/Zhevo*, Aos call their priest as *Putir/Patir* Konyaks *Ngengpa* and the Sumis *Achineu*. Among all the tribes, the foremost criteria, to be a village priest was that one has to be male and an elderly person. In all likelihood priesthood became hereditary as the office was accessible only either to the descendent of the village founders or to the priestly clan. Priesthood was therefore organised along patriarchal lines.

The functions that the village priest performed were varied and many; he had to initiate offerings and sacrifices on auspicious occasions on behalf of the whole village; he scheduled all the festival days, initiates communal feasts and he announces the time of sowing and harvesting. One may note that except for the obligatory right to certain portions of meat, food and drinks during ceremonies and occasions, the priest enjoyed no other pecuniary benefits or authoritative privileges on account of his office.

Priesthood required fulfilment of all personal rituals and strict adherence to the religious norms the failures of which had grave consequences impacting the individual and his community. Offering of sacrifices were sometimes rejected by the gods because of the faithlessness and breach of taboos by the priest, and instead of blessing the gods chastise the community by sending natural calamities (Bendangangshi & Aier, 1997, p.51). An elderly 64

years old male¹⁷ from Lumami narrated that the village priest of Lumami was struck dead by lightning on account of failing to perform a ritual properly. Haimendorf (2004, p.19) records how the *Tevo*'s wife was tricked into breaking a taboo of leaving the village¹⁸ by obliging her friend to pick lice from her hair, through which the friend had extracted one hair from her head and taken it to her own village. When it became known, the *Tevo* and his wife were immediately deprived of their dignity and exiled as the (strand of hair) was believed to be a part of them and hence the 'virtue' of the whole community had been carried off to a foreign village.

The village priest was therefore regarded not only as the sacred head of the village but he was the representation of the sanctity of the village itself. His failure at maintaining a ritual status resulted in dire consequences for himself and his entire village. Hence, although he was the symbol, and considered to be endowed with sacredness serving as the channel between the 'sacred' and the 'profane' he was held accountable when he was perceived to fail ritually.

The village priest also served as the repository of knowledge of the community apart from the knowledge of matters related to beliefs and rituals. He was adept in understanding the laws of nature which was so crucial for their agricultural life, he acted as the source of such information by setting the time for the agricultural cycle, besides his counsel was sought for in important matters related to life. Haimendorf (2004, pp.18-19) credits the unity of the village with independent *khel*¹⁹ and rivalling clans of the Angamis to the institution of village priest who as a descendant of the founder of the village acts as the mediator between the community as a whole and the supernatural world.

¹⁷ Interviewed on 18th July 2018, at Lumami village.

¹⁸ During the first three and a half years, a *Tevo* was tabooed to visit any other village.

¹⁹ Angami villages were usually divided into sectors which in olden days were local units having independent laws and customs, these sectors were identified as *khels*. *Khels* / *thino* actually meant clans as each major clan dominated different sectors the sectors became recognised as *khels* instead.

2.3.3. Gender Relation

Men and women are not considered equal in most societies. Their roles and statuses are defined distinctly separate, although they may complement each other. Such distinctions are often left unchallenged and members adhere to it as natural especially when such are backed by religion. The notions of femininity and masculinity are also closely related to patriarchal societies thus providing more segregation between the two. Most religion contains teachings that regulate different roles that women and men play in the society, in accordance with the different statuses they are entitled to. Often Gender status in societies are found to be tied up with religious tradition, this is evidently more so in tribal societies where culture is so pervasive that members acknowledge it as 'natural' to accept it, while those who go against it are seen as deviants. To this effect Khala (2012) had noted that religious appropriation of roles and status is so strong that they are taken as dharma and to be observed in expectation of receiving blessings or protection from evils.

Religious practices that ascribe different roles to men and women involve practices which differentiate a woman from a man. Such practices accentuate gender differences and legitimize the observance of the same as a religious duty. Geetha (2006) notes that, religious definitions and interpretations of the notions of femininity and masculinity are based on the innate attributes of men and women.

Girls in traditional Naga society were differentiated from the boys, right from their birth. This can be observed in birth-rituals wherein a rooster or a hen would be killed for a male or female child respectively. Thereafter, even the number of ritual days observed on occasion of the birth of boy child and girl child differed. Among the Sumis when a girl-child was born, if it was a first born, the mother observed ritual days for nine days whereas if it was a boy-child the ritual days was observed for ten days. For subsequent children, six ritual days were observed for a male child and five days for a girl-child. This differentiation was justified on

the belief that a male child possessed more veins than the females. Similarly, in the *Akinikuvu* (ear piercing) feast, the male child's ears were pierced in two to three places in both ears; however for the females the ears were pierced, one each on both ears. The rationale for the pierced ears being to adorn it with ear ornaments during community events, especially festivals, which identified the child/children as having parental guardianship. The significance of ear piercing was crucial when understood against the backdrop that ornaments were symbols of affluence. In this context, men were more privileged to showcase their family wealth (status) as compared to the women folk.

Once they reached a certain age the unmarried girls joined the girls' dormitories where they were trained in learning the skills and manners deemed suitable for women in life. Among the Ao and Konyak Nagas it was acceptable to receive male guests in the girls' dormitories. On the contrary, male dormitory irrespective of tribe, were considered sacred and women tabooed from entering it. Another reflection of exclusive male domain was a circular sitting area called *Apukito* among Sumis and *Tehuba*²⁰ among the Angamis where men folk gathered to discuss the affairs of the village. Such areas were strictly prohibited and out of bounds for women. Women were thus segregated from the domain of sacred spaces accessible to men.

Other forms of gender segregation were also visible in the day to day life of the Naga people. Activities such as husking paddy, spinning, weaving and beadworks were performed by women and it was taboo for men to touch the implements for such work. These activities (husking paddy, spinning, weaving and beadworks) were also restricted at the start of Jhum till harvest believing that such works would bring misfortune on paddy. Perceived masculine activities like hunting or holding feasts were regarded as taboo for women. The men were

²⁰ *Tehuba* is also referred to as boy's dormitory (Pienyu, M. (2017) *The Angami Naga Society: Continuity and Change* (p.42).

required to practice sexual abstention on the eve of such events based on the belief that it would weaken them.

Burial of women who died during childbirth, or of spinsters were not allowed within the village. This was done so in order to ward off the spirits of such circumstances from multiplying in the village. Amongst the Sumi of Ighanumi village when a woman was about to give birth she was isolated and kept in a separate house built for the purpose where she was supplied with food and clothes only through a hole by the relatives. Similarly among the other tribes too a woman at childbirth was considered to be ritually impure and spinsters who died were always buried outside the village. Intriguingly, here we find a spinster is considered *profane* while at the same time a woman at the time of birth also fell under the same category (*profane*). Here, constructs of *sacred* and *profane* (Durkheim 1915) appeared based on biological factors which places woman at a lower ritual status by default. Moreover, the religious definitions and interpretations of the notions of femininity and masculinity based on the perceived innate attributes of men and women (Geetha 2006) find relevance in traditional Naga society.

Ritual status differed among men and women as could be gathered traditional practices that during *Sekrenyi* (an Angami festival) men went to the village spring to purify themselves whereas women were restricted from going to the village spring for three days. In *Aphikimithe* (chastement of the body) ritual among the Sumis on the eve and night of that ritual day, all men were to remain chaste i.e., sexual abstention. They collected their clothes and weapons and stayed in the house of any male members of their clan whose house was considered suitably clean (i.e., a household which was not experiencing any death, birth, sickness, social stigma etc during that particular period) for the purpose. Hence women's influence appears to cause impurity; moreover men had the privilege to attain sacredness through certain rituals.

In the arena of religious leadership women could never become village priest. It was the male who officiated as a family priest, a clan priest and a village priest. In the agricultural cycle, amongst the Angamis the first reaper known as *Lidhepfu* was assigned to a woman and among the Sumis too the first reaper known as *Amthao* was sometimes assigned to a woman. However, such roles cannot be equated to priesthood as these were rituals performed at a certain limited time frame and for a specific purpose with no other significance after its fulfillment. Moreover, in this time frame there was always the prevalence of the village priest as the superior religious head.

With regard to the role of Angami women in religious activities Pande & Yaho (2012, p.71) had argued that they were no less significant from Angami men not only in the household and worship but also in the public festivals. While involvement of women in certain rituals were found, significant of which is their supporting role in the feast of merits, it does not merit equal standing with men, by any measure. The feast of merit itself cannot be observed by an unmarried man. Delving deeper into the significance of the feast of merit, one will understand that it celebrates the wealth and achievement of the man and through it a man acquires a new social status in the society. Although the woman, as wife of the man enjoys certain privileges of the new status, it is in relation of her being his wife, the status of which would have no significance in the event of her widowhood. Thus a woman's role of holding fasts and ritually preparing rice beer for the purpose of the feast becomes only a reflection of her supportive role which can be validated by the custom that woman cannot hold or give the feast of merit.

Women's role in other household rituals fell under three categories (1) observing rituals to purify herself (like after giving birth) (2) rituals assisting the culmination of the main ritual which is performed by a man or for a man (the Angami observance of *Kizie*, a ritual performed for the prosperity of the household is performed by the lady of the house or in the absence of a female member, a neighbor was called thus appearing to be a prerogative of female; however,

understood against the background that it is part of the entire ritual of *Sekrenyi* which was concentrated at elevation and purification of the male folk, the women's ritual role is accentuated as more of an assistance) (3) performing rituals in place of man (among the Aos in *tendini* a household ritual which is part of the *Tsüngrem mong*, a thanksgiving festival, every household performs family sacrifice by slaughtering pigs, hens etc which was done by the male head and in his absence maybe performed by a widow).

Hence, in traditional Naga society women's place in society was underlined by taboos wherein she was regarded as endowed with weaker/lesser ritual value. Women did not play a role of primacy in religious matters, and their limited role therein was confined to the domestic rituals. Religiously women were assigned only the status and role of a subordinate assistant.

2.4. Life Cycle Rituals

Members of society go through phases in their individual lives which endows on them certain new status and role. Marking such new phase individuals often perform rituals, these rituals serve as forms of social recognition. The rituals observed in individual stages of life is called the life cycle rituals or the rites of passage; Van - Gennep (1960, pp.2-3) elaborated it as "The life of an individual in any society is a series of passage from one age to another and from one occupation to another....every change in a person's life involves actions and reactions ...to be regulated and guarded so that society as a whole will suffer no discomfort or injury." In the life of a Naga, events of birth, marriage and death are significant phases which impact not only an individual but affect other social members as well.

2.4.1 Marriage

Marriage is a universal cultural phenomenon albeit the forms of marriage may differ from society to society and every society has its mechanism of recognising or regulating a marriage. Every religion likewise has its prescribed form of marriage. A society which adheres

to a marriage system strongly regulated by religion reflects a society where religion plays an influential role in the society; secularized societies, on the other hand would project people following a system of marriage which need not necessarily be regulated by religion.

In traditional Naga society marriage was an important institution, the forms of marriage differed among the tribes on the grounds that the Angamis and Aos adhered to monogamy whereas the Konyaks and Sumis accepted polygamous marriages, though in practice only few (particularly the Chiefs and affluent) could afford it. This difference is well understood accepting the different polity of the tribes and the nuanced differences in their belief system with regard to the concept of the super-naturals especially the Supreme Being and the Creator. In other words the tribes functioned with their independent belief systems and this explains the different forms of marriage found among the different tribes. The significant aspects related to matters of matrimony were examined to understand the determinate influence of the belief system in the marriage practices of the Nagas.

a) Conception of sacred and profane

Amongst all tribes two types of marriage were practiced. The first type which fulfilled all social conditions was entitled to engage with all the prescribed rituals and ceremonies which were crucial for invoking the longevity, the security and prosperity of the union; this kind of marriage was highly revered and considered the most sacred form of marriage. The second kind was those that concur without observing all the formalities; such happens when a couple eloped, or in case of pre-marital pregnancy, these marriages were accepted socially accepted after paying a token to concerned authorities. However couples who opted for the latter form of marriage lose the privilege to observe a full ceremony and with it the performance of the rituals associated with marriages and hence fall under the category of a profane kind; moreover these marriages are socially stigmatised. Another form of marriage union that falls under the

second category ensues when a couple within a prohibited degree of kinship, usually within same clan, marries. Clan endogamy was considered a sacrilege, a profanity and when it happened the couple was ostracized from their society (village).

In traditional Naga marriage the concept of whether a marriage was sacred or profane was determined by the observance or infraction of the rules related to marriage mates, pre-marriage co-habitation and pre-marital sex. The recognition of a sacred or profane marriage on the other hand determined not only the ritual status but the social status of the couple, wherein the couple who fulfilled a sacred marriage acquired a higher social status whereas couples who were fined or ostracized evidently falls in their social standing.

b) Marriage Rituals and Social Relations

Marriage rituals among the Nagas were not confined to the wedding day; from the proposal till the culmination of the wedding various rituals were observed in relation to the marriage. The proper Naga marriage begins with a proposal which was conveyed by a close kin of the groom, preferably a matured woman among the Sumis, while in the case of the Angami Nagas, an elderly woman was deployed for the purpose. Among the Aos an old man from the same clan assisted the groom in his effort to convey the proposal by accompanying him to the girl's house as he present them a gift of fish. Elderly people thereby played significant role in the marriage rituals. The older generation are generally expected to have more life experiences and hence more knowledge of one's cultural norms, thus including the elderly in the marriage rituals facilitated the learning of the marriage culture among them.

Close friends of the bride and groom actively participated in the marriage rituals playing the roles of companions to the couple. When the bride goes to her new home she was accompanied by her friends apart from her relatives; similarly when the groom comes to fetch the bride or wait for her at his home, as the Aos do, the groom was accompanied by his friends. The bride spends the wedding night accompanied by her female relations and friends while the

bridegroom spends the night at the boys *morung*. The role of friends in the marriage procedure helps ease the discomfort of stepping into a new life, while at the same time those friends who participated were recognised as sharing very close relation with the bride/groom and thus relationships (friendship) becomes socially recognised and more integrated.

However, it was the clan which played the major and most significant role in the marriage rituals. Among the Sumis, for the bridal procession the *anisu* (the other word for *ani* – the paternal aunt) was the first who picked up a load and handed it to someone to carry as they begin to proceed to the bridegroom's place; the Sumis customarily had the *ani* pick up the *akhau* (a box like basket) containing ornaments, clothes and other gifts for the *kulaliu* (bride) from her parents. Holding the *akhau*, the *ani* stepped out of the house with her right foot first. The *kulaliu* (bride in Sumi dialect) fell behind her aunt. For the Aos the bridal procession called *jeptsu* was led by the oldest woman of her clan. In a Konyak marriage on the wedding day a red rooster held by the bridegroom's paternal aunt (father's sister) was wiped across the groom's right foot with the rooster's toes while pronouncing blessings which was followed by doing the same for the bride. Among the Aos, on arrival of the bridal procession at the bridegroom's house, the groom's father (or the eldest brother /eldest clan member in the absence of the father) sacrificed a rooster in the presence of all the wedding guests gathered and proceed to read the omen from the entrails and announced what it portend. Though, women appeared to play significant role in the marriage rituals, they were representatives of the father's clan and the patriarchal influence was perpetuated with the marriage rituals being performed significantly by the father's clan.

2.4.2 Pregnancy and birth

Birth of a child had great social and cultural significance for the Nagas. The magnitude of the significance of the birth of child was such that divorces were permitted in case of a

childless marriage (Jamir & Lanunungsang, 2005, p. 204). A 93 years old respondent²¹ from the Angami tribe admitted to divorcing his first wife because they had no child even after 10 years of marriage which was in contrary to his dream wherein he dreamt of holding a gun (which portends sons) and hence he was convinced he will be able to have children.

a) Taboos related to pregnancy

One of the strictest taboos observed during pregnancy was the prohibition of certain food to an expectant mother. It was taboo for a pregnant Konyak for instance, to consume the meat of the animals which were killed by tigers; she was also forbidden from eating the meat of a dog, duck, chicken, crab, locusts, frogs, or that of any spotted animals. Among the Sumis, the meat of wild animals such as owl is forbidden; so also the meat of the buffalo is forbidden. Similarly, among the Angamis, local delicacy such as bee larvae and crabs were not to be consumed by a pregnant woman. These food items were forbidden lest the child be born with traits of such animals (Nivili , age 76).²²

Pregnant women among the Konyaks do not touch a dead body or anything related to it. Brahma (1992: 66) speaks of the same practice among the Bodos. Among the Aos a pregnant woman do not kill animals because they believe that whichever part of the animal hurts , the infant in the stomach will experience the same pain too (Asempla, age 84) .²³ These practices reveal the belief in the close affiliation between a mother and the baby and the perceived consequences of the mother's behaviour upon the unborn child in her womb.

b) Rituals associated at birth

When a child is born a green leaf is put up at the front door post by the Konyak, to signify that they were undergoing *nyüopu* (ritual day) and during this period no guests were allowed to enter the house. At the time of delivery the male members of the family wait at the

²¹ Interviewed at Jakhama on 10th October 2019.

²² Interview at Lumami 13th August 2019.

²³ Interview at Molungyimsen 20th June 2019 .

baan (morung). Whereas among the Aos it is considered most important that the father be present at the birth of his child (Mills, 2003, p. 264). Upon a birth in the household the Ao people observed *among* of six days for a boy child and five days for a girl child. After the seventh or sixth day the parents go to the village spring and have wash, the day after which the father offers a chicken and egg in front of his field house and thus concludes the ceremonies (2003, p. 266). The first born of a Sumi parents require observance of *chini* (ritual taboo) of ten days for a boy child and nine days for a girl child; during the ritual period the *Zunhebo* (*Leucosceptrum canum*) plant will be hung at the main door to indicate the observance of taboo (Aye, 1997, p.30), for subsequent children six days will be observed for a boy child and five days for a girl child. During this period guests were not entertained and until completion of the period certain food (wild animals such as squirrels and rats, jackals, hyenas) were also tabooed to be consumed (Yeptho, 1985, p. 25). When a child is born among the Angamis, a different hearth is prepared for the mother where in a new vessel, a rooster for a boy child and a hen for a girl child will be cooked exclusively for the mother. The food is not to be shared with any other; if the mother is unable to finish it an old woman may consume it and the vessel in which it was cooked will be thrown away after the ritual period is over (Pukho age 93).²⁴ Similarly among the Sumis of Ighanumi the chicken cooked for the mother was to be consumed entirely by her on that day. The justification on both cases being that sharing the food would lead to extreme hatred with whomever it was shared.

Thus, rituals observed at childbirth were different between the boy child and the girl child hence socialization of gender differences began right from birth. The birth of a child in a household renewed the in-group identity and we-feeling by having the household observe rituals day from which out-groups (guests) were not allowed to visit. The separation of a new cooking hearth and separate food/ vessel for the mother reflects that childbirth separates the

²⁴Interview at Jakhama 10th October 2019

mother from her normal life on one hand, while signifying her in that particular event as taboo, indicated by the fact that food cooked for her could not be consumed by others for fear of developing enmity.

c) The Naming Process

Among the Yepthomi and other Sumi clans Hutton (1968, p.236) notes that a child's name was usually given on the day that its ears were pierced i.e. the third day of its birth. The Angami can give the name of a child soon after it was born (Kevilie age 51).²⁵ Brahma (1992) observed that among the Bodos no specific name-giving ceremony is observed, however names were chosen in a peculiar manner, he writes: *Children are given pet names associated with (i) the physical appearance of the baby, (ii) the name of the day on which the baby is born, and (iii) the affection or the love of the parents or relatives (endearing terms)*. Among the Nagas in general, names were usually conferred by the elderly within the clan either from the matrilineal or patrilineal side. Among the Konyak and the Angami it was the father who usually names the child.

Names among the Nagas were chosen with great significance, Honngo (age 73) said he had divined for the favourable names of his children wherein names related to good fortune, success in life, ancestral names and names related to significant events were given. Sometimes infants were referred to by terminologies designating such as bitterness and even of filth such as pig's stool ²⁶ to ward off the attention of spirits towards the infants. When a child is unwell for a long period, it was common for his/her name to be changed because it was believed that the given name may not be suitable; also at times a name with more powerful significance was given to symbolically overcome the condition.

²⁵Interview at Khonoma 11th October 2019

²⁶A respondent gave information that her maternal uncle was called *Thevobo* (pig's stool in Angami) apart from his real name to protect his life because his parents lost many children in their infancy before him . Interview at Dihoma 11th October 2019.

While the names are usually given by elders and there maybe more than one name, name chosen was determined not just on the significance of the name itself, but sometimes the choice made may be dependent on ‘who’ gives it. Hence, the name proposed by the most significant person usually an elderly was given to a new born child. The name chosen for a child therefore was not done by the significance of the name itself but determined by the significance of the person who gave it.

2.4.3. Death and Associated Rituals

Though the Nagas believed in a fairer world in the afterlife, death was never welcomed nor considered noble; for them death was a defeat in the tussle of life with the death spirit. Hutton’s (1921, p.227) reproduction of McCabe’s writing of a cry raised as they proceed to bury a dead body reveals thus “[D]o not be afraid, do not mourn. You have only followed your parent’s custom. Although you have died, let us remain happy. Although God has not been kind to you, and you have died, fear not!” Death evidently was regarded an unkind act of God, a disfavour from the supernatural. Life in this context is constructed as a blessing from their creator and the extinction of it within its influence. The death of a person was never a private affair; the customs and ritual observances attached to it pervaded family, clans, neighbours and the entire village too. The more significant a person was in the village the more number of people participated in the death rituals. While unnatural deaths were not entitled to rituals, deaths that occurred naturally were tended to with rituals of strictest observances as discussed below:

a) Observances of the death ceremony

Soon as the death is confirmed among the Angamis close friends and relatives brings meat, rice and rice beer to the dead person’s house.²⁷ Among the Konyaks when there is a death, log drums are sounded; if it’s the death of an *Ahng* messengers were sent to other villages

²⁷Interview with Keviekilie (51) at Khonoma on 13th October 2019.

conveying the news. Men folks from other villages then assembled in their war-dance attire in respect of their king (Konyak, 2008, p. 64). Keviekilie (51 years)²⁸ said of the Angamis that when an influential man dies messages were relayed to the neighbouring villages.

The Angami and Sumi followed the practice of burying the dead while the Aos and Konyaks prepared raised platform to place the deceased. The Angami buried their dead at dusk; the grave is usually dug right in front of the house or alongside one of the village paths (the land being in possession of their clan). The Sumis and the Aos had graveyards according to their *Asa* (colony in Sumi) where the dead was disposed; among the Sumis, however, for people with their own lands they are sometimes buried right outside their house or on the side of village pathways. The Aos, the Konyaks and the Sumis, similar to the Angamis, all performed the disposal ritual of dead only in the evening.²⁹

The day following the death of an Angami, male (young) relatives of the deceased brought cattle which may include the dead person's if he had any. The animals were killed and after setting aside the head, liver and certain portions, the meat was divided giving the share according to who they believe the deceased would have given the same based on his relation with them (Hutton, 1921, p. 226). Among the Sumis on the third day of death, a *mithun*, a cow or a pig was killed depending on the capacity and status of the deceased and a feast prepared in commemoration of the dead to mark the complete separation of the living and death (Aye, 1997, p. 42). The killing of animals which are assets reveals that the symbolic separation between the living and dead incurs economic expenses. This is important when understood that this responsibility is managed by the closest eldest male kin of the deceased. Hence, while the deceased is given a symbolic farewell at the same time it ensures that the social structure of the living is renewed.

²⁸ Interview with Keviekilie (51 yrs) at Khonoma on 13th October 2019.

²⁹ The Sumis of Ighanumi bury their dead only after sunset because they believed that the dead will not find their way in daylight, but in the dark they will be able to do so. Interview with Elders.

b) Death and Symbolic Ornamentation

A rich Ao man's corpse platform would have a carved post in front and a man who has offered the *mithun* sacrifice will have a wooden ridge- pole extension symbolizing a horn. In case the dead man had taken many heads but didn't perform the *mithun* sacrifice the horn is symbolized by a bamboo root (Mills, 2003, p. 280). Over the graves of a Sumi warrior are hung pots on bamboo pillars signifying the number of heads he collected (Aye, 1997, p.42). Among the Angamis the skulls of all the animal slaughtered in the death ceremony, was placed along with the shield, ornaments, clothes, weapons, eating and drinking utensils and other personal possession of a dead man .On a woman's grave a little basket is placed containing her spinning and weaving utensils and a diamond shaped frame on which different coloured threads are stretched (Hutton, 1921, p. 227).

The Aos placed representations of full set of ornaments, *daos* (a sword like tool/weapon) and spears, wooden blades and hung a good cloth just below the corpse-platform. Bamboos were also planted on the ground slantwise and in short length to indicate the tally of sacrifices performed by the deceased, whereas the number of animals he had sacrificed was put up in wooden effigy (Mills, 2003, p. 281).

Such practices as discussed above indicate that graves were symbolic spaces of segregation by gender and social status. Through the symbolic ornamentation on the graves the identification of the rich and the poor, a man and woman could be ascertained.

c) Death and Taboo

There were two types of death that all Naga tribes distinguished - natural and unnatural death. Deaths which were caused by accidents were considered as unnatural deaths. Unnatural deaths were considered as ritually impure and had taboos attached to it .The Angami call such deaths as *sesho*; persons who were killed by wild animals, or dying in childbirth were considered ritually impure and were tabooed from being buried within the village (Hutton,

1921, p. 216) .Among the Aos when a man dies of unnatural causes the entire village observed *anempong* (a ritual day prohibiting abstinence from work in the field) for seven days, whereas his household observed the same for thirty days (Bendangangshi & Aier, 1997, p.73). Among the Sumis apart from death of unnatural causes the death of spinster was also considered impure and hence she was buried outside the village gate (Sema, N.Y., 1985, p.27). Among the Konyaks unnatural deaths were considered cursed and it was taboo to touch or see them and it was only the priest who was considered old and matured to withstand the curse even if it afflicted him, thus he could not perform the last rites of the dead.Unnatural death was also considered to be a disgraceful death, a cause of great shame (Tzemthak age 64).³⁰

2.5. The *Morung*

Youth dormitories commonly referred to as *morung*³¹ was a notable institution in traditional Naga society. There were separate dormitories for the boys and girls. Among the Angami the boys dormitory was called *Tehuba*, among the Aos *Ariju* , the Konyaks called it *Baan* and the Sumis *Apuki* . The girls dormitory was called *Kichuki* ³² by Angamis, *Tsüki* by Ao , *Ywo* by Konyak and *Iliki* by Sumis. After a Naga child reached puberty it was considered shameful for him/her to sleep in the house of his/her parents and hence one joined the dormitory till they marry. Food was taken at the parent's home and in the daytime except for those who are assigned to watch the dormitory all members attended to their respective family work, and returned to the dormitory in the evening to spend the night. This ensured that the familial relation and responsibilities were not shirked. The prevalence of the youth dormitories especially the practice of a separate dormitories served the purpose of effectively socializing the young members of the traditional Naga society, training the boys and girls in their respective norms of occupation and en-culturing the traditional etiquette of their gender,

³⁰Interview at Shangnyu on 30th June 2019.

³¹ *The morung* is an Assamese word for dormitory.

³² Pienyu , M . (2017). *The Angami Society : Change and Continuity*. p.42

integrating them to their socio-cultural life by method of learning from their seniors. Members of the dormitories were categorized into successive age groups, which was more or less hierarchical with the senior members at the top and the youngest age group at the bottom, the age groups being essential in delegation of work and authority.

An important aspect to observe in this dormitory system was that while both boys and girls' dormitories functioned to impart the necessary life skills to its members and socialize them, the boy's dormitory enjoyed more prominence and had more function as compared to the girl's dormitories. Jamir and Lanunungsang (2005, p.87) speaks of *Jozen/Ajozen* the highest category of age group in the *Ariju* as the best subordinate body to the village administration and social control measures, directly imposing fines on culprits and lawbreakers in the village. Aye (1997, p.62) notes that final decisions for raiding villages were taken in the *Apuki* and that important matters with regard to political matters were decided in the *Apuki*. Konyak (2008, p.34) records that any unsettled dispute arising in the village among families were brought to the *baan* and the *baan* takes care of the matter and ensure that justice is provided. It was in the boys' dormitories that important matters related to political affairs, law and order were discussed and settled, thus representing a stark difference in power and function as compared to the girl's dormitory which had no such recognition.

Apart from the difference in the exercise of power and legal authority between the girls and boys dormitories another important difference was that while the boys (could) visit the girls' dormitories, the boys' dormitories were taboo for women to access. It was taboo for womenfolk to come near the *morung* or engage in any type of works related to building of a boy's dormitory (Nshoga, 2009, p. 79). The *sacredness* attached to the boy's dormitory was such that it was taboo to beat or kill a man in its domain, hence even a murderer who took refuge in the *morung* cannot be pursued in anger/revenge (Nshoga, 2009, p.80) into it. Moreover a warrior on his return from a successful warfare does not go directly to his house

but took refuge in the dormitory first. The boys/men's dormitory was therefore seen as a *sacred* space, consecrated from its very inception. Eliade (1995, p.26) expressed "Every sacred space implies a hierophany an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different". While the dormitory in this instance appears relatively set apart from other ordinary spaces the hierophany/irruption of the sacred is not applicable. Thus, reflecting that the sacred appears here more an initiation of social activity than an irruption of its own accord. On the other hand, Ivakhiv (2003,p.14) had argued that constellations of meaning that mark out particular places are integrated within larger systems by which these places are contrasted against each other and differentiated into the sacred and profane, the sacredness of the boys' *morung* is akin to this construct. Patriarchal societies have traditions of empowering men with greater authority and accesses to resources, privileges or opportunities; the Naga boy's *morung*- an effective mechanism of generating cohesive spirit, regulation of power and an agency/institution which ensures the transmission of socio-political culture restricted this domain to women physically on grounds of desecrating the sacredness of the space and thus restricted the entry of women in this arena of power related institution reflecting the restriction of women in the political arena in the larger system. Ivakhiv's (2003) postulation of how the meanings of the sacred and profane related to particular places are understood based on the socio-cultural practices prevalent in a society is true in the Naga attitude of sacredness towards the boy's *morung* where, as a patriarchal society, men are regarded superior in all aspect which here includes the space significant to them. The aspects that stands out thus are- on one hand the *morung* functioned to segregate women and men as having different ritual status and on the other hand individual members were internalized with shared meanings and integrated into their socio-cultural life through social interaction and sharing a collective life; most significantly the boy's dormitory reveals the close integration of socio- political relation with religion.

2.6. Feast of Merit

A symbolic and at the same time pragmatic practice with a two-fold objective of wealth distribution and acquiring high social status in Naga society was the ‘feasts of merit’. A married couple who had amassed enough wealth (in grain and cattle) to give a feast to the entire village could provide one. However, it was taboo for an unmarried man to throw one despite possessing wealth. Likewise, the rituals prescribed involved required the role of a husband and a wife. The most significant ritual to be observed was sexual purity; the feast-giving couple was required to abstain from sexual interaction. Among the Sumi Nagas the feast givers were supposed to continue sexual abstinence for thirty days post the feast of merit. Yehevi(82 years old)³³ narrated a real-life story wherein “*Asu Khakhu did not fulfil the 30 days restriction and was inflicted with skin disease after giving the feast of merit*”. Similarly among the Ao tribe, after the feast the couple was to maintain sexual purity for a year. Marriage is known to regulate sexual life in a socially and religiously accepted form. Sexual desires on the other hand are carnal desires. The abstinence from sexual act by a married couple symbolizes the defeat of physical desires, while the sharing of hard earned wealth symbolizes that worldly wealth are perishable and not meant to last for eternity. The feast of merit, ‘*Aphisa*’ (translates as hosting of bodies) as is called among the Sumi entitled the givers of the feast to adorn their houses with a Y-shaped post called ‘*aitsu kuba*’ (meaning an oxen horn) signifying the animals that were sacrificed to hold the ‘Feast of merit’. According to an 84 years old respondent ³⁴ from the Sumi tribe those who have not given the feast of merit could not construct houses with backdoors. The *feast of merit* also entitled the givers to adorn ornaments signifying their achievement. For instance, among the Aos the number of hornbill feathers worn by the wife of

³³ Interviewed on 17th July 2018, at Lumami Village.

³⁴ Interviewed on 19th July 2018, at Lumami Village.

a feast-giver signifies the number of feasts they had given. Besides, menhirs were implanted by the wayside of the villages commemorating the feasts, these served to symbolize the affluence of giver of feasts of merit and in turn served to remind the society to work hard and acquire such affluence too. The *feast of merit* also re-integrated the individual to a society as individual wealth were shared with the community, which also revealed that the more the individuals were able to contribute to the community the more social recognition the individual enjoyed. Thus, in the ritual of *Feast of Merit* is reflected the notion of ‘purity’, ‘taboo’, the relation of the individual and the society also the significance of marriage and most importantly the intricate relationship of all these aspects.

2.7. Attires and Ornaments

The attires and adornments of the traditional Naga society in designs were unique to their society. The designs and patterns varied even within tribes which speaks volumes for the artistic creativity of the Nagas. Clothes became a basic necessity as societies evolved, not only because of the need to protect oneself against the elements of nature but for the sake of modesty (although the percept may vary from society to society). Amongst the Nagas, attires and ornaments were more than protection against the weather or need to adorn their body; they were symbols of identity that relate to gender, age groups, qualifications, status and prestige, village, clan and family . The Ao *Lankummulong* (a conch shell necklace) was worn only by the wealthy male, it could not be worn by women or even other meritorious male such as warriors. A son or grandson of a rich parent was entitled to wear such necklaces by virtue of his parents/grandparents affluence. A maximum of three braids of conches could be worn but normally only two was worn. If a boy was seen wearing two of these ornamental pieces it indicates that both his father and grandfather were rich men (Mongro, 1999, pp.25-26). Hence, ornaments were symbols of affluence and these affluences were legacies which a boy child was privileged to exhibit but not a girl child. The Sumi clan called Kati has a wrap-around

(mekhela) called *Kati Mini* which can be worn only by the Kati women. Likewise, each piece of attire or ornament is meant for specific category of people, thus the presence of stratification is visible from the analysis of the dresses and ornaments. There were attires and ornaments specified for male and female, married and unmarried, young and old, rich and poor, warrior and commoner. Similarly, certain attires or ornaments were worn only at auspicious occasions.

Apart from the significant symbols of wearing the different attires and ornaments, there were certain rituals involved in making these adornments- each unique and significant. In fact, there were different rituals for preparing even the material itself. The indigenous process of coloring the goat hair to be used for the process of the head plate required the person preparing it to maintain purity for at least six days before he began the preparation lest the infraction entail him for early death, or misfortune descend on his family, or the colour itself be not long lasting. The process of it was not performed at home or in the village because they believed if it is known or seen by others, the colour will not be strong enough (Mongro, 1999, p.35). The armlets were made only by select people after a period of maintaining purity, for it was believed that if such rituals were not observed the rim of the armlets cracks during the preparation. Armlets are considered so sacred that among the Sumis, nobody is allowed to touch a man wearing armlets. Hence, ornaments itself are endowed with sacredness and preparing it required rituals related with abstinence even from other people.

The attires and ornaments were symbols of social prestige/status, it symbolized the material wealth or economic status; a reflection of their artistic creativity and aesthetic taste, it revealed the raw materials available or rare to them, it had etched on its designs the life and experiences they lived through, the nature that inspired them and most of all it narrated their constant engagement and revered attachment with their beliefs.

2.8. Festivals

Derived from the Latin word *festum*, festivals have been a part of every society for ages and understood as a reflection of human culture (Cudny, 2014). A festival is often considered a special occasion of feasting or celebration which is associated with religious practices (Lanunungsang & Ovung, 2012, p.3). It is also understood as events staged by a community not only for entertainment but also to reinforce the identity of the group and disseminate the important values of the community; expressive of the emotions, the traditionally accepted values and beliefs of the group and their attitude towards life (Nagi, 2018, p.1). However, Cudny (2014) argues that festivals understood only as celebrations of social and religious rites and consolidating basic social groups in Durkheimian³⁵ tradition and Frazer's³⁶ perspective was only because early scientific analyses were conducted as part of sociological and anthropological studies at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. Criticizing that many events which were considered festivals did not necessarily fall in the category of performing religious rites or related to beliefs, neither strictly confined within familial or traditional groups, Cudny (2014) felt the need for a cohesive and concise definition of festival instead. He, therefore, defined festival as "...an organized socio-spatial phenomenon that is taking place at a designated time-outside the everyday routine – increasing the overall volume of social capital and celebrating selected elements of tangible and intangible culture."

In traditional Naga society each tribe observed their own festivals throughout the year. Then again, each tribe observed various festivals according to pertinent occasions; there were also certain festivals observed only by particular regions. Among the Angamis two of the most

³⁵ "Durkheim saw feasts and festivals as an 'effervescence' the intensity of which cements the solidarity of a group or a people, a representation of the invisible relationships between man and the laws of nature, a veritable institution whereby the bonds between the members of a society are maintained, regenerated and reproduced" (Cudny, 2014, p. 641).

³⁶ "...Frazer viewed "feasts and festivals as acts which reproduce the great systems of beliefs and mythologies" (Cudny, 2014, p.641).

significant festivals, which were celebrated in all regions were *Sekrenyi* and *Terhiinyi*. While for the Aos *Moatsü* and *Tsüngremmong* were the most significant festivals observed annually. For the Sumis *Tuluni* and *Ahuna Kuchu* were prominent festivals and among the Konyaks *Aoleng* and *Aonye* were celebrated most grandly.

Sekrenyi festival was observed right after the land was prepared for agriculture. The festival was held for ten days and though it was celebrated in the month of February the date varied from village to village. Different rituals were observed with the progression of days. The main rituals of this festival were associated with cleansing and purification of their households, their bodies, their tools and weapons and the village well. An important feature of the festival was the purification of the male folks of the village who were required to bathe in the village well, which would be forbidden for others once it was cleaned, and to abstain from sexual act. In one of the rituals a new hearth is prepared during the festivals where men-folk cook separately using only new utensils. Towards the last days of the festival a household ritual where unblemished roosters are sacrificed according to the number of males in the household, the position of the legs are then studied for any ominous signs. Lastly, the men-folk goes to the village gate and perform a ritual of shaking their shawls to send off the spirit of the festival bidding it to return next year.

Terhiinyi takes place in the month of November/December and is considered a thanksgiving feast as it takes place after harvest. This festival was also observed for 10-15 days. It was marked by rituals of offering *zu* (rice beer) to ancestral spirits, gathering and feasting. The feast could be given by an individual when such takes place, others gather in his house dressed in their festive attires to help prepare for the feast. Another important ritual was the collection of paddy from every household for the '*Liedepfü*' (the first reaper) and '*Tsiekrau*' (the first sower) for their services.

Moatsii festival of the Aos was celebrated with the first germination of seeds. It was celebrated for six days seeking blessing from '*Lichaba*' (the creator in Ao belief for good crops and bountiful harvests. Before the commencement of the festival women prepare the grains for *azü* (rice beer in Ao) and gifts for their male friends. The men-folk on the other hand clear the village and the graveyards. At the *Ariju* (bachelor dormitory) a cow or pig or more was slaughtered depending on the number of members and the wage they earned collectively for the occasion. Women do not par-take the feast in the *Ariju* but they also feasted separately. The men-folk go for house visits and join others in singing, drinking and feasting on the meat. Young-men visit the *Zuki* (girl dormitory) and socialize. A ritual of the men-folk dancing around the village also takes place.

Tsiüngremmong was a thanksgiving festival to '*Lichaba*' which was observed for three days in the month of August. This festival was marked by playing sports such as tug-of-war between men and women, slaughtering of pigs and slabs of meat distributed to each household, besides different age groups bought pigs with their collective earnings and hold feasts in their patron's house.

Tuluni was a mid- year festival of the Sumis held for five days usually in the month of July. It was a festival which was mainly dedicated to protect the crops in the field. During this festival brewing *aji* (rice beer) and eating pork were important rituals. Another significant ritual observed during *Tuluni* was the offering made by married couple at the foot of the front central post of their house. Son-inlaws were invited to sumptuous feasts by their in-laws. On the last day of *Tuluni* the common path to the fields were cleaned by the male folks.

Ahuna Kuchu was observed after the harvest. This festival was held for two days. On the day the harvest was stored away the male-folk slept separately away from the women. The next day the men-folk continue to stay away from women, fetched fresh water early in the morning and cook *Ahunabalu* (balls of rice) *asupuhu* (bamboo water containers) and consume

it. Later in the evening a ritual of offering *Ahunabalu* and *aji* was performed to ward of disease and death in the coming new cultivating year.

Aoleng of the Konyaks was celebrated during the last part of March and the beginning of April. It usually lasted for week. When the festival neared houses were repaired, and paths to the fields were cleared. The festival was marked by rituals of bringing in necessities for feasting and celebrations, such as collecting vegetables, bamboo vessels and leaves for wrapping food. Animals which were freely reared in nearby jungles such as *mithun* (*bos frontalis*), buffaloes, cow and pigs were caught and brought home for the feast. While every household prepares feast to share with friends, relatives and neighbors different age groups also organized feasts in different houses. A ritual of all men-folk going to the main entrance gate is performed, at the gate a feast is prepared and the senior members teach the young ones the art of warfare. Once they return from the gate the different *baan* form their own groups dancing and singing visiting the other *baan*. The girls usually sang in the evening at their *ywo* (girl's dormitory) while they serve refreshment to the men-folk who sang and dance in the daytime. The end of the festival was marked by the beating of the *ghüm* (drum).

Aonye was a thanksgiving festival of the Konyaks. It was celebrated for three days. Every household performs rituals and prepare feast thanking the *Kahwang* (Supreme God) for a good harvest. During this festival allocation for cultivating new fields, fixing the time for construction of new houses etc was discussed.

Though, there were differences in the dates of the festivals the general period of observing these festivals were pre-harvest and post-harvest. Pre-harvest festivals were dedicated to fresh crops whereas post-harvest was centered on harvested crops. The time frame also presented the beginning and the end of an agricultural year. Rituals related to prosperity and protection were characteristics of pre-harvest festivals whereas post-harvest were characterized by thanksgiving and protection. Besides, rituals related to cleansing and

purification, also the maintenance of the village was observed. Social activities of sharing food and drinks, visiting and feasting were common in all the festivals. Another commonality is the distinct visibility of the social structure which separates the men and women, the young and old, family and non-family etc. In context of the traditional Naga society, festivals, therefore reflect social and religious aspects. In other words festivals were inter-wined with their socio-religious life. The Durkheimian (1915) notion of festival as ‘an ‘effervescence’ which cements the solidarity of a people and represent the relationship between man and nature, where the bonds of members of society maintain, regenerate and reproduce’ are found to hold true.

The different Naga tribes had varied notions of the Creator and the Supreme beings, however their belief in the ancestral spirits and the Gods who shared their immediate visible space as also the belief in the sky spirits were the same. The commonness, moreover, is that their belief system pervaded all aspects of their socio-cultural life. Whether it is in the way they structured their society where the roles and statuses were defined by their religious beliefs, or in the way they socialized the new members of the community or the manner in which they attired and adorn themselves, or in how they go through their life cycles – the role of religion we find is not just significant, it is in fact the determining factor of all the aspects; without the religious beliefs linked to these aspects the meanings are lost. In other words, it was their religious beliefs and practices which gave life to these socio-cultural aspects; it was their ideas of their religion which formed the norms, patterns and values of their socio-cultural life.

Religion in traditional Naga society was thus closely inter-wined with their socio-cultural life. It is what Geertz (1973) had defined as a cultural system, in traditional Naga context religion and culture cannot be separated, religion was a way of life for the Nagas (Nye, 2003). The everyday life of the Nagas cannot be segregated from the religious life because the ‘moods and motivations’ (Geertz, 1973) of their everyday life were influenced by their religion itself. How did a society with its structure and culture so deeply entrenched in its belief systems,

and followed for generations reached a situation where they had to abandon their age old beliefs and culture? The following chapter will throw light on how Nagas relinquished their traditional beliefs and practices and converted to Christianity.

CHAPTER THREE

INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS TO CHRISTIANITY: DYNAMICS OF CONVERSION

That a very large Christian conversion movement has taken place is not disputed. The question of why the movement has taken place is (Downs, 2003, p. 383).

3.1. Christianity – A Brief history of its Movement to Nagaland

In the early thirties of the first century, Jesus a Jewish artisan became known as a prophet, teacher and healer in the region of his birth: the northern part of Roman occupied Palestine (Balling, 2003, p.3). He preached a message of repentance in anticipation of the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God (Padinjarekuttu, 2010, p.2). While he was in Jerusalem he was accused of blasphemy and sacrilege by the Jewish authorities and was put to death by the Romans. Soon after his death his friends and disciples began proclaiming that he had risen from the grave and began inviting everybody willing to put faith in him as their Lord and saviour. As a consequence of their preaching, a number of men and women joined the disciples and began being known as a people apart. “This “people” is known as the church, after the Greek word *kyriake*, derived from *kyrios*, “lord and master.” The message preached by the church became known by the name of Christianity, after the title given to Jesus: Christ, that is, the King, the Messiah” (Balling, 2003, p.3). By the end of the first century Christianity had spread outside the Roman Empire (Padinjarekuttu, 2010, p.4).

Though it is widely believed that St. Thomas, a disciple of Jesus, first introduced Christianity to India in the first century itself; the subcontinent did not experience the influence of Christianity much, until the arrival of the Europeans in the 15th century. In the 16th century the Jesuit¹ missionaries were invited by the Mughal Emperor Akbar to his court, though he did

¹ A Roman Catholic order of priests founded by St Ignatius Loyola, St Francis Xavier, and others in 1534 , to do missionary work.

not convert, his invitation led to the beginning of Christian mission in north India (p.57), and the work of the Roman Catholics² began in earnest in the country (Houghton, 2006:1). Hereafter, Protestant³ ministry in India was first established in Tarangambadi (Tranquebar) by two German missionaries, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Pluetschau in the 18th century (Padinjarekuttu 2010, p.66).

In the 17th century the spread of European colonialism and the rise of the power of England were developments that lead to significant political and religious (Evangelical Christianity in particular) impacts in the East, as mission became a partner of the world's conquest; and the East India companies encounter with India and subsequently England's colonization of India had serious consequences likewise (p.66).

By the 19th century the British took control of Northeast India,⁴ with the conclusion of the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826; the history of North East India of which Naga Hills form a part underwent a significant change (Achumi, 2012, p.1.) Following the annexation of Assam, missionary presence in this region had become prominent, the modern missionary work in Assam traces back to the British Baptists, who started a mission in Guwahati in 1829 which was later abandoned. The American Baptist⁵ missionaries commenced mission work in Assam⁶

² Roman Catholic is a term sometimes used to differentiate members of the Catholic Church in full communion with the Pope in Rome from other Christians.

³ Protestantism is the second largest form of Christianity. It originated with the 16th century Reformation, as form of protest against the errors of the Roman Catholic Church. At present the Lutherans, Calvinism, Anglicanism and a large number of other denominations with a considerable variety of belief are called Protestant Churches (Padinjarekuttu 2010: 49).

⁴ Note

"The Christian movement in North East India is closely related to political developments during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries....At the beginning of the nineteenth century North East India was politically unstable due to the decline of the Ahom kingdom....It was this struggle for the throne that lead to the intervention in Assam affairs of the Manipuris, the Burmese, and finally, the British....The Burmese intervention had begun in 1817The Burmese occupying forces also came in to conflict with the British in neighbouring Bengal.... Despite repeated warnings, the Burmese made...frequent raids into British territory...the result...was a declaration of war with Burma.... the Burmese were driven ...out of North East India as a whole....As a result ..of the success of British ...the Burmese king sued for peace ,accepting terms largely unfavourable to himself in the Treaty of Yandabo...." Frederick S. Downs, 1983, *Christianity in North East India*, pp. 17-19.

⁵ The American Baptist Churches is a Baptist Christian Denomination confined to USA. Baptists are Christian distinguished by baptizing professing believers as opposed to infant baptism

⁶ Note

in 1836 with a view to preach the Gospel to the Shans and the Chinese beyond the mountains (Rao, 2005, pp.xvi-xvii).

At that point in history, which was towards the mid- twentieth century, the Nagas who visited the plains of Assam for bartering goods, encountered Christianity.

The first recorded convert to Christianity among the Nagas was Hubi from the Konyak tribe who was baptized by Nathan Brown in Sibsagar (Assam) in 1847 (NBCC, 2012, p.12). The second convert was an Ao man by the name Longchanglepzuk who was baptized, in Sibsagar (Assam) by E.W. Whiting in 1851 (p.12). Their demises soon after their conversion severed the trail for paving the way for any other possible converts. The third convert, and the thread that spools to the history of the Christian movements and conversion amongst the Nagas and specifically of Nagaland, was Supongmeren, an Ao Naga, who frequented the valley (Assam) for bartering wherein he got familiar with Godhula Brown (An Assamese Christian convert) and through whom he got converted (Frykenberg,2008, p. 423). Subsequently, Supongmeren eager to share his faith with his people back in his native village, Molungkimong (Dekha Haimong), invited Godhula to visit his village to share the Gospel (2008, p.423). In 1871 Godhula after consultation with E.W. Clark (an American missionary stationed at Sibsagar) embarked on a missionary venture to the Naga Hills (Downs, 1971, p. 64) and the rest became history.

Amongst the Angami a man by the name Seliezhu is considered the first Angami Christian, he was baptized by S.W. Rivenburg in 1895 (Downs 1971, p.140). In 1904, Ghusuna and Ghopuna two men from the Sumi village Ighanumi received baptism from Rev. Revenburgh (Rivenburg) officially becoming the first Christian converts among the Sumis. For

"While the American Baptists were the first to establish permanent work in North East India they were not the first to preach here. For some years before they came portions of lower Assam had been occupied by the British Baptist and Serampore Missions." F.S. Downs, 1971, *The Mighty Works Of God*, p.10.

the Konyaks after Hubi's conversion (1847), there was a dearth of its repetition until 1932 when Longna a product of Impur Mission School received baptism through Wickstrand, the Missionary at Impur.

3.2. Conversion – Concept and Theory

Conversion, in Western expression, is an etymological derivation of the Latin term *conversio*, it represents a translation of the Greek word *metanoia*, literally implying *going the other way* (Olson, 2015, p.55). In Sociology the term conversion has much complexity as it has been borrowed from outside the tradition and therefore lacks in specification of it being narrowed down to mean only a particular reality (Robinson & Clarke, 2003, p. 5).

Over the years exceptional sociological works on conversion has provided diverse perspectives of the concept resulting in more difficulty in standardizing the definition of conversion. Lofland and Stark (1965, p.862) wrote in context of conversion as all men and human groups having ultimate values, a worldview or a perspective which provides them more or less an orderly and comprehensible picture of the world; according to them “When a person gives up one such perspective or ordered view of the world for another we refer to this process as conversion.” Here, the emphasis is on the intellectual side where ideas and beliefs undergo change significantly and conversion is seen as a process of abandoning a particular worldview and idea of the cosmos and adopting new ones. For Snow and Machalek (1984, p.170) conversion concerns “...not only a change in values, beliefs and identities, but more fundamentally and significantly, it entails the displacement of one universe of discourse by another or the ascendance of a formerly peripheral universe of discourse to the status of a primary authority. ” Though there is change in the ideas and beliefs here the change points to changes that can take place within a particular worldview and not just one worldview to be replaced by another completely, in other words there is a continuity of the old and the new

worldview though the structure may differ. On the other hand Ifeka-Moller (1974, p.57) in her work related to conversion in Nigeria asserts “I take conversion to mean a change of affiliation from cult to church, or from orthodox Christianity to spiritualist church.” In this regard change of a religious social group/identity and institution takes the foreground; and suggests conversion can take place with, more or less, the same ideas and belief rather than a complete change of it.

While dealing with the various theories of conversion in the context of Islam and Christianity, in their edited book *Religious Conversion in India*, Robinson and Clarke (2007, p.6) observed “It does appear though that it is best to demarcate ‘conversion’ as shaped by the historical experiences and meaning systems of Islam or, even more significantly, Christianity from conversion which may then be employed as a neutral sociological term to understand change of religion, beliefs and practice.” Following their proposition conversion may then be understood to imply a change of religion or foregoing of change in certain beliefs and practices; these change(s) may then be understood to be influenced by certain historical experiences and meaning systems from other religion or religious group.

The nature of conversion had been a bone of contention between religious believers and social scientists with the later dismissing claims of divine intervention in individual lives as causes for conversion and suggesting instead that such has human origins (Heirich, 1973, p.1) however religious phenomenon such as conversion cannot always be reduced to explanations that does not include the religious/spiritual aspect because in a conversion, religious traditions providing models, guidelines, or theologies for a valid conversion and rituals are involved too (Rambo, 1999, p.264). Therefore, the spiritual aspect has been stressed to be considered in analysing conversion.

When Christianity was introduced to different indigenous societies in the 19th and 20th centuries different theories materialized in explaining conversion. The intellectualist theory was popularized by Horton (1971, pp.45-46) where he explained conversion in African experience as a shift in the cosmology where a traditional cosmology consisting of a two tier system i.e., the microcosm (with the lesser spirits having more prominence in their everyday local life) and macrocosm (the belief in the Supreme being as concerned with the whole and distant from their everyday life) persisted. With exposure to the wider world the local life experienced different political and economic development and as the local people began interacting with people outside their microcosm, the microcosm explanation of events became implausible hence the lesser spirits retreated and the Supreme Being took direct control of their everyday life. Ifeka- Moller (1974) on the other hand theorized that social-structural factors affected change of religion the most since cosmology itself was embedded in a social order and she identified social conditions such as ‘Colonial Rule, Negative Economic Change , Political Change , Education’ etc which promotes conversion. Carmody (2018) viewed conversion through the missionaries’ perspective, analysing the role of schools in religious conversion and concluded that socio-cultural factors predominates over Horton’s thesis of traditional cosmology as the main reason for conversion amongst the South Zambians of Africa. Hence the intellectual and social structural theory has been in debate over which presides in the phenomena of conversion.

The Post- colonial theory also emerged as an approach which examined the experience of people in Africa, Asia and Latin America experiencing conversion to world religion especially Christianity after being colonized (Rambo, 1999, p.262). This theory explains conversion of the oppressed people as being overwhelmed by the presence of colonial power military, economic, and cultural power shaping the superstructures and infrastructures of

concerned societies. In this perspective the numerous ‘changes’ that came with the colonial rule is seen as a favourable climate for conversion as postulated by Horton (1971, p.86).

Approaches to understanding conversion through the converts was made significant with Lofland and Stark’s (1965) model of conversion which identified *predisposing conditions* i.e., attributes of persons prior to conversion and *situational contingencies* as processes engaged in conversion. Snow and Machalek (1984) further emphasized analyzing the convert’s account in understanding conversion.

Conversion can be individual or communal, a personal transformation or institutional affiliation, happening in a single moment of crisis or engaged in as a lifelong process of change (Cumpsty, 1980, p.123). Hence a single theory becomes insufficient in explaining conversion of different experiences, time frames and circumstances. Rambo (1999, p.259) had therefore deemed it necessary to utilize diverse theories to fully appreciate the complexity and variety involved in the process which would in turn foster more sophisticated comparative studies of conversion. Unlike the earlier tradition of relying on single perspective/theory the trend has now emerged to incorporate various theories even ‘different disciplines’ (Robinson & Clarke, 2007) in understanding religious conversion.

3.3. Conversion in Nagaland – Historical and Theological Perspectives

Studies on conversion to Christianity in Naga context for a longer time presented two facets- the historical account with focus on the role of Christian missionaries in initiating the change in religion and the theological explanation of conversion to Christianity. Perspectives, on causes of religious conversion of tribals to Christianity in India, have been engaged in arguments criticising the Christian missionaries’ enticing offers of social services and better economic condition (Patel 2017), a socio-economic view which Eaton (1984, p. 20) had already rejected; when talking about the Naga tribes reason to conversion, he had summed “ Nor does

one find in the Naga Hills the sort of severe decline in economic standards that might have placed the hill people in a state of ‘relative deprivation’, so that religious change would have ridden the back of a movement for social reform. The independent and self-reliant Nagas had never experienced a ‘pariah’ status either internally or in relation to outsiders.” Further, Eaton (1984) opined there is no correlation between a tribe’s exposure to the mission or the government by comparing the Angami Naga’s conversion at a relatively slower pace than the isolated Sema (Sumi) Naga. The reason for the Nagas conversion argued by Eaton (1984) was intellectual; he pointed to their cosmology and how they were related to social situations. According to him the arrangement of aligning the Christian cosmology into the Naga religious system reveals the patterns behind the different Naga tribes pace of conversion and ultimately provide an answer to their cause of conversion in the first place. However, Eaton’s almost plausible contrast fails in explaining why the Konyak tribe who share a similar cosmology with the belief in a Supreme deity and a socio-political structure of Chieftainship (*Ahng* system) like the Sumi did not follow the conversion pace of the Sumis. The first Konyak convert in present Mon district is recorded as in 1932 which took place in Tamlu village while the last conversion in the village took place in 1950s, in Shangnyu and in Longwa villages the last conversions took place in 1963 and 1984 respectively. Konyak (2008, p.143) had identified the conversion pattern in the Konyak Naga areas as a ‘village movement’ or ‘mass movement’ reasoning that this was mainly due to the structure of Konyak Naga society where, when a man of high rank or special status accepted Christianity, the people loyal to him usually followed suit. This is debatable as field-study for the current study data reveals that in Shangnyu and Longwa the first converts converted *en masse* and this took place prior to the Angh’s conversion. Therefore, despite the Angh being the most influential person in the village people had converted prior to him. Besides, since the first case of conversions was of converts converting in masses, this does

not sustain the theory of an influential person's conversion in the village motivating the others to convert.

Thomas (2016, pp.127-128) viewed the imposition of the British and the Indian administration on the cultural aspirations of the Nagas to participate in modernity as an important factor for the large number of Nagas adopting Christianity in the 1950s. However, this does not sufficiently address, on one hand, the case of late converts (fieldwork data reveals the Konyaks mostly converted after 1960s and there were converts amongst the Angamis till 2018) for whom access to modernity was not a problem anymore; on the other hand this view also contrasts Jamir's (2017, p.392) observation of how "...the period between 1953-1956 was a phenomenal one for Naga Christianity. In their despair and privation, people turned their allegiance to the living God alone....1950s revival phenomena are filled with the remarkable and the miraculous. Nuh records a strong mass- spiritual awakening that touched almost all the tribes. The resulting growth in church membership was so rapid that thatched-roofed church buildings were often hurriedly constructed in order to accommodate the overcrowded churches." Then again the spiritual mode of conversion raised by Jamir (2017) cannot however explain conversions that resulted without the influence of the revival events.

The nationalist narrative Thong (cited in Jamir 2017) propounded views the Naga people's conversion to Christianity as a form of political resistance opining that the Nagas' conversion represents an unhealthy identification with their erstwhile Christian Western colonizers and an exhibition of their opposition to their immediate non-Christian colonizer, that is, India. He reflects Naga conversion as more of a symptom of a communal nervous breakdown. Similarly Longkumer (2018, p.10) also explained Naga conversion in a nationalist narrative crediting the substantial rise in the scale of conversions to Baptist Christianity amongst the Nagas of Nagaland between 1947 to 1970s to intense Indian military operations and the ongoing resistance; however unlike Thong's negative attitude he sees the Naga people's

predilection to Christianity as a consolidating integrative factor for the different Naga tribes by providing a ‘moral authority’ that superseded parochial ‘tribal’ loyalties, and territorial divide. Another theory associated with the 1950s and 1960s is the psychoanalytic perspective, similar to Rambo’s (1999) which features in Aphuno Chase-Roy’s (cited in Downs, 2003, p. 394) understanding of conversion of the Angami Nagas during this period; where the traumatic changes taking place in the society due to the conflict between the ‘insurgents and the security forces’⁷ was identified as the major factor behind the late twentieth century conversion movement among the Angami Nagas.

Varied perspectives thus prevails in explaining conversion to Christianity in Nagaland; however the bulk of these perspectives concentrates on the time frame between 1950 -60 and hence do not adequately explain conversion at other time frames and in all circumstances. A perspective left unexplored appears to be an understanding from the convert’s point of view and their reason for conversion, whereas Jamir (2017) has noted “I believe that first priority must be given to the account itself, as it expresses the perceptions of those who actually experienced the event, in this case a religious revival.” Her work, as evident, had focused only on participants of religious revival events.

3.4. Conversion in Nagaland – The Converts’ Accounts

In the present study, an approach on the *converts account* (Snow & Machalek 1984) is applied, the accounts will then be analysed applying relevant conversion theories which will

⁷ When the British exit India, they left without resolving the problem of Naga Hills leaving it as a part of the Indian Union. The Naga people’s representative council, Naga National Council, formed in February 1946 in the initial years of India’s Independence engaged in dialogues and negotiation with the Government of India concerned with the political status and aspiration of the Nagas. The Government of India’s strong stand against the independence of the Naga people led to frictions between the two parties resulting in inability to come to a consensual agreement. The Indian government began enforcing repressive measures in an attempt to defuse the Nagas voice for Independence. Police and military were deployed, villages were burned, people were tortured, and women were raped - faced with extreme state repression, eventually the NNC took to arms in 1956. In 1964 the first ceasefire agreement was signed. While the struggle for Naga Independence has continued till date and skirmishes took place in between the ceasefires and Peace period, it was during the late 1950s- early 1960s that the conflict was at its most intense and the Naga people suffered most severely at the hands of Indian military.

aid in unveiling the dynamics involved in the process of conversion. Snow and Machalek (1984, p.178) recommended using the convert's account method by constructing and composition of convert's accounts as topics of analysis. According to them this would advance our understanding of personal biographies in relation to conversion and also identify the differences and similarities in the way conversion is constituted among different groups. In the context of Nagaland conversion to Christianity had spanned across different historical time frames and had different rate of conversion amongst its tribes (Eaton 1984). Thus, as significant converts' accounts ranging from the earliest conversion period to the late convert period are covered it will reveal whether the socio-political cultural context and historical events influenced individuals and their conversion. Besides, the accounts being inclusive of the four tribes i.e., Angami, Ao, Konyak and Sumi a comparative analysis of why the tribes differed in their responses to conversion may be arrived at. Significant case studies of conversion accounts derived from historical⁸ and empirical methodologies⁹ are therefore presented and analysed.

a) The account of Subongmeren

“It was in Shibsagar, to the South of the Brahmaputra, that Godhula first met Subongmeren. The Ao Naga who regularly came down into the valley to barter was befriended by Godhula and his wife. Invited to live in their home, Subongmeren gradually absorbed essentials of their faith, learning of the redeeming love of a single, almighty, and Everlasting God through the Grace of Jesus Christ. Within a few months, he accepted the Gospel and became a baptized believer.” (Frykenberg, 2008, p. 423).

⁸ Owing to difficulty to conduct empirical investigation with early Christian converts (i.e, have contact with the first generation Christian converts now, their recorded accounts mostly excerpts are used for analysis. Also oral narratives were employed to assist in providing relevant details connected to the early converts whenever possible.

⁹ Case studies were conducted where interview method was utilized for sourcing information from identified late converts.

The year was 1847 (NBCC, 2012) which rules out the mental, psychological, physical (Bendangjungshi 2011) and political trauma (Thong 2014) Nagas endured through the intense Indo-Naga conflict which began in the 1950s. The fact that it was not a western missionary but an Assamese man who convinced the Naga man of Christ proves that there was no social or economic expectation (Patel 2017) involved in the conversion. In the analysis of the account what appears apparent is the relationship and interaction between the convert (Subongmeren) and the agent of conversion (Godhula), and therefore sustained interaction (Snow & Machalek, 1984, p. 185) and familiarity could have eased the process of conversion. However, the philosophy of the new religion had a deeper impact (Sema, J. 2013) as can be observed from the convert's action of not wanting to keep the faith to himself but choosing to let his village people know of it too.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Christianity was introduced in Africa, Asia and Latin America as European colonial powers expanded (Vashum, n.d). Colonialism and Christianity became synonymous as Christianity was introduced wherever colonial power became established. The Post- colonial theory emerged as an approach which examined the experience of people in Africa, Asia and Latin America experiencing conversion to world religion especially Christianity after being colonized (Rambo, 1999, p. 262). This theory explains conversion of the oppressed people as being overwhelmed by the presence of colonial power military, economic, and cultural power shaping the superstructures and infrastructures of concerned societies. In this perspective the numerous 'changes' that came with the colonial rule is seen as a favourable climate for conversion (Horton, 1971, p.86).

Naga Hills was colonised by the British as part of the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826; however active British administration in the Hills began only in 1881. The Naga Hills were appendaged to Assam and till the transfer of power in 1947 it was administered as a frontier district of Assam. Achumi (2012, p.22) noted that British colonial administration in Naga Hills

district was founded not on a defined territorial boundary at once, but on a growing process of extension throughout the period, 1881-194. The areas of the present Mokokchung, Zunheboto and Phek districts were incorporated into the British district of Naga Hills gradually however following a policy of expediency and Convenience, the British left at least half of the present Nagaland un-administered. Thus, a large part of the present Tuensang and Mon districts and Kiphire sub-division remained in the un-administered tract even at the time of the transfer of power in 1947.

With the establishment of British administration in the Naga Hills the political structure changed drastically; the once autonomous village states were clubbed together into districts and the villages functioned under the village chiefs who only received directions and supervision from the district officers with no authority to participate in the formulation of policy regarding their own affairs. Along with the extension of active administration, the British introduced a number of measures such as means of communication, taxation, education, judicial system, and public health. The British administrators also suppressed 'headhunting' and slave trade (Achumi, 2012, p. 49). Thus, the Nagas experienced structural changes in their socio-political and cultural life where the British Administrators can be seen as the power elite. Reflecting on the tremendous change ushered in by the political order Downs (1983) had viewed Christianity as a means through which some people of the region were able to accommodate themselves.

In the discourse of conversion related to Nagaland the colonial context is often ignored (Pruett 1974; Epao 1993; Jamir 2017). Conversion even at the individual level happens in a context which involves the political, social, economic and religious domain in which a person is living at the time of his or her conversion (Gration cited in Rambo, 1993, p.20) The dynamics of Naga conversion cannot be fully grasped without setting it against the background of colonial rule in the Naga Hills. Though the first conversion cases to Christianity predates active

administration of British Government in Naga Hills, these conversions happened after the British had gained control of the North East India of which Naga Hills formed a part (of Assam to be precise); by then Missionary work and mission fields were already active in Assam. The first conversion cases of Nagas prior to 1881 took place in Assam. Hence, the theory of the tremendous changes introduced by British Administration in Naga Hills causing conversion is not applicable to these cases. However, the fact that North East India was already colonized and the colonial presence well established in Assam still links the first Naga conversions with colonialism, as prior to the colonial annexation there were no conversion records of any Naga despite reports of interactions between the plains and hill people even before the westerners appeared.

Achumi (2012, p.69) had argued that the British introduced Christianity in Naga Hills as a part of their policy of territorial expansion and like in other parts of the British Empire, in the Naga Hills the Christian missionaries enjoyed protection and moral support from the British Government. The missionaries working in colonial Assam no doubt enjoyed the same privileges. The British Government was a power figure the likes of which the entire North East or Naga Hills had ever experienced, the once independent princely regions and villages with their own power players were all brought under one single government – politically the colonised North East region was integrated as one. In this new power structure the Western missionaries, patronised by the Government, too enjoyed the respect reserved for the colonial masters and certainly the protection in an otherwise foreign space and culture, Christianity the religion of the rulers inevitably was regarded with equal importance.

Against the backdrop of the political changes and new power structure taking place in the history of North East India and Naga Hills in particular the explanation of conversion during the colonial period 1826-1947 may thus follow the following points of arguments.

The conversion account of Subongmeren, Hubi and Longchanglepzuk the first three Naga conversion cases that took place in Sibsagar Assam appears to fall under the purview of Horton's (1971) intellectual theory where working outside their own community and engaging in modern occupation, 'variables' which are identified to make the transition from a traditional cosmology to macrocosm, were common among them. Hubi, the first Naga convert, Longchanglepzuk the second convert and Supongmeren the third convert were all baptized in Sibsagar; the former two were residing there while the later was a tradesman who commuted from his native land to the plains. The colonization of North East region by the British bringing the area under one umbrella provided more mobility and employment opportunities for the local people to venture beyond their local area and their traditional economic activities. Moving away from their local landscape which encompassed their worldview and engaging in occupations which were not traditional meant work spaces or activities undefined by their religious beliefs and practices these may have made them aware of other worldviews which impacted their acceptance of a new religion. Besides, as the former two being residents of Sibsagar the desire to integrate with the new community may also have motivated them to convert.

b) The account of Molungkimong Village

"Subongmeren wanting his own people to share his faith ... asked Godhula and his wife to consider the possibility of coming up to his village so that others could hear the Gospel. In October 1871, he embarked upon his perilous venture" (Frykenberg, 2008, pp. 423 – 424). Frykenberg (2008) recorded that when Godhula reached the village, he was suspected to be a spy and was imprisoned in a small hut. While in confinement Godhula lifted his voice and began to sing. Each day people came and listened to Godhula's songs. Each day, as they responded to his tunes with amiable comments, his fluency in the Ao Naga language began to improve. They responded to his calm assurance, good humour, and insights with increasing

respect. As numbers of hearers increased, he shared his faith, and taught Gospel truths. In due time a small bamboo chapel as a place of worship and learning was erected by the Nagas themselves. Six months later, Godhula went down to Shibsagar accompanied by nine newly converted Ao Naga Christians of Molungkimong. An elderly 85 years old respondent ¹⁰ of Molungkimong village narrated that in 1872 nine people were baptized in Sibsagar on 11th November to follow the new *dhorom*.¹¹

Similar to the situation of Subongmeren's conversion, here too, Godhula's personality played a significant role in winning the trust of the Nagas; however this narrative do not speak of adopting the technique of interpreting the Naga traditional cosmology aligned with the Christian cosmology a factor, that Eaton (1984) considered as the prime cause of conversion. The perspective appears irrelevant here as the cosmologies were presented differently instead.

The second phase and first mass Conversion which took place in Molungkimong was prior to British's active administration in the Hills. In this case, too, similar to 'Subongmeren's conversion' it was not a western missionary but an Assamese Christian who influenced the Naga people about accepting Christ proving that the social or economic expectation (Patel 2017, Sema ,J. 2013), often alleged in conversion where western missionaries are the agents, was not found . While the visibility of colonial influence cannot be discerned easily here Godhula's (an Assamese man) presence in the hills (an area prone to being hostile to outsiders) could not have been feasible without the political development that had occurred in the North East region; the fact that Godhula was suspected to be a 'company spy' and though imprisoned but not treated ill otherwise reveals the village's regard for the British authority. The reference to the new religion as *dhorom* could have been as Godhula was an Assamese man and

¹⁰ Interviewed on 20th June 2019 at Molungyimsen

¹¹ The Nagas often referred to Christianity as *Dhorom* , it appears to have been derived from the Assamese word *Dhorom* meaning purity.

introduced it so or because initially Assamese was the medium being used. The British jurisdiction of the North East region and their attempt of policy of peace with the Naga Hills offering trading facilities (Achumi, 2012, p.6) paved the relation of interaction and safe conduct of Godhula with the Nagas which in turn lead to the first (mass) conversions to Christianity in a Naga village.

c) The account of Ghopfuna & Ghusuna from Ighanumi Village

“Asu (Grandfather in Sumi) Ghusuna and Ghopfuna from our village were the first converts” recounts Inato¹² of Ighanumi village, *“they were both Kukami Kivimi (village chiefs)”*. According to him it was from their visits to neighbouring Chakhesang village Chezuba that they were influenced by Angami evangelists and accepted Christianity. They were baptized in 1904 and soon after Asu Ghusuna began serving as the pastor and Asu Ghopfuna’s home became the mission house and they began proselytizing in other neighbouring villages.

It is recorded that “In the initial stage Sumis assimilated the Gospel message not through the direct contact with American missionaries, but through the Angami and Ao Evangelists from the South and North” (NBCC, 2012). Downs (1971, p148) mentioned Ivilho a Sema boy from Ghokimi village enrolled in Kohima School who was baptized in 1906 or 1907 as the first Sema Christian; he further added that when Rivenburg was touring western Sema area in 1913 he discovered several Christian communities which the Kohima centre was completely unaware of . It may be noted that the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) recognizes Ghusuna and Ghopfuna from Ighanumi as the first Sumi converts, who were baptized in 1904 (NBCC, 2012, p. 114).

¹² Interviewed on 23rd November 2016, at Ighanumi Village.

Their position as chiefs entitled them to enjoy certain privileges and wealth uncommon to commoners. Besides noting the absence of western missionaries or any outside agency proffering economic incentives it may be pointed out that their conversion did not result in the change of their power to any higher status nor gain of any economic benefit, hence the economic inducement theory (Sema,J. 2013, Patel 2017) emphasized is not valid for understanding conversion here. On the other hand, because of their influential position they did not experience harassment unlike some of the other converts (as will be noted in other forthcoming cases in this study) or were restrained from engaging in evangelistic activities. Following their conversion they (Ghusuna and Ghopuna) set out to spread the Gospel and despite stiff opposition and rejection from their own people, they remained committed to their call (NBCC, 2012, p.114) and through their efforts Christianity spread in South Sumi area.

The position of village chief is hereditary among the Sumi; in a Sumi village the chief and his subordinate chiefs and their clan own all or substantial area of the land and every agricultural year the common village people are distributed land for cultivation by the chiefs. The villagers in return pay homage to their chief in the form of giving their agricultural produce, helping in the chief's field, etc. A Sumi village functions as a monarchical system where the chiefs are the Supreme rulers. Moreover, a village chief is not given recognition only in his village but as most neighbouring Sumi villages are villages set up by their migrant clan members, close ties tend to remain amongst the villages nearby and the chiefs from other villages are treated with equal respect and loyalty. Such influential positions must have aided the evangelistic work of the two chiefs from Ighanumi village; although their preachings were not accepted at first they were not restrained from continuing to preach about the new religion not only in their village but to other villages as well.

d) The account of converts from Lumami village

During the course of Field study on early converts, it was gathered that Thaishe Achumi was the first convert from Lumami village. He converted in 1921, through Zhekikhe Achumi who was his kinsman from the neighbouring village of Sumi Settsu.

The then chief of Lumami village, Vikiye Kinimi, it was narrated, at first did not accept the *dhorom ye* (meaning *dhorom* religion in Sumi) and instead went out of his way making the life of the newly converts miserable; however when both his heirs (sons) died due to sudden illness while still in their youth he was said to have accepted the new faith.¹³

In the first place kinship appears to have been the common factor between the convert and the agent of convert. Similar to the case of Subongmeren and the first converts from Ighanumi village, in this process of conversion too, there is no visible presence of a western missionary.

In the second place the role of the impulse of the beginning and sustenance of almost all religious belief can be discerned, i.e., the acknowledgement of a higher power. It has to be noted that the power dynamics, between the supernatural and humans, was acknowledged in the indigenous religion too. Therefore, it indicates a replacement of a belief in an authority by a superior power, an idea Stark and Bainbridge (1996, p.72) had reflected on in observing how certain cultures are retained or replaced; according to them, “humans will retain that culture which appears more rewarding.” Moreover, in the case of Vikiye, life crises situation of loss appears to have initiated a *turning point* (Stark & Lofland 1965) culminating in conversion.

¹³ Interview data from Zhetovi Kinimi (aged 84) and Yehevi Kinimi (aged 82) of Lumami village , interview date 27 April 2019.

e) The account of conversion from Changki Village

Reverend Sadem (98 years)¹⁴ from Changki narrated that Tzüdiong was the first convert from their village. He recounts that *“Tzüdiong went to Impur and worked for the missionaries for sometime where he became a Christian and returned in 1896 with a new dhorom. After his return to the village he tried to teach them about the new faith but he was driven away however he was protected by God and he survived; miraculously slowly one by one the others began to convert.”* He also added that by 1935 (approximately) the entire village converted as Christianity became dominant. Temjen (63 years old)¹⁵ confirmed that Tzüdiong was restricted by the village to share about the new faith and his own family and clansmen threatened to disown him too. After Tzüdiong, another man named Odangba went to Impur and worked as a cook for the missionaries; in 1898 his brother Impokumba joined him in Impur where they accepted Christianity. Impokumba attended primary school and came to Changki as a school teacher and through him three of his four students converted after which the Changki Baptist Church was established in 1901.

The account of first converts from Changki reveals significant dynamics of conversion; firstly in the case of Tzüdiong he was treated with hostility and appears to be considered a deviant even by his own kinsmen and his evangelising efforts coerced to stop. On the other hand Impokumba was successful in evangelising through the medium of school. Moreover, it may be noted that Godhula visited the village in 1883 to spread the gospel and to set up a school but the village denied him permission. In Molungkimong, Godhula was introduced by Subongmeren and despite suspicion towards him at first the villagers (some of them) responded positively towards him. In Changki, Godhula was yet to establish familiarity with anyone from the village hence he was out-rightly considered an outsider and his intentions therefore treated

¹⁴ Interviewed on 30th November 2019, at Changki Village.

¹⁵ Interviewed on 30th November 2019, at Changki Village.

with no consideration. Here, the agency of educational institution played an important role in processing conversion as the activities of the school were independent of the interference of villagers in general; hence Christian teachings could be imparted without much restriction. Moreover, within the schools itself, teachers held influential status and were in positions to influence the young minds; the conversion of the three students who converted through Impokumba are reflective of this. This was the most probable reason why there was a difference between Tzüdiong's unsuccessful evangelistic efforts and Impokumba's evangelism; in other words it was the agency of the school which led to a different output.

Carmody (1971) in his study of the role of school in African conversion, concluded that socio-cultural factors predominated over traditional cosmology (Horton 1971) as the main reason for conversion; he argued that "...many such converts were 'school converts' people who had become part of the school not for reasons of the superior explanatory power of the religious message but because of the mission's ability to launch them into modern sectors of the economy." The early converts took place through schools in Changki village, they did not join the school with prior influence of the new religion; however they had already joined the school which allowed them access to opportunities/privileges available with education hence it does not correlate to Carmody's 'school converts' who joined school to have access to modernity and its new economy; the 'school converts' in Changki village embraced the new religion through the influence and efforts of a respected figure, i.e., the teacher.

f) The account of first converts from Jakhama, Khonoma and Dihoma

In Jakhama village a teacher posted there named Sir Khiezeio, who was Christian, used to share about Christianity, in the course of his teaching, which generated interest in some of his students. However when Rev. Rivenberg, the Kohima missionary arrived in the village to baptize them, all except for a boy called Saho retraced their intention to convert. After

conversion Saho made efforts to proselytize but was restrained and ridiculed for his efforts to spread the new religion. Not surprisingly, though he converted in 1905 he remained the only Christian in the village for 21 years.¹⁶

Nisier Meru was the first educated person from Khonoma. He was working as a teacher under Rev Rivenberg in Kohima mission school when he converted in 1897.¹⁷

In Dihoma village Katahe was the first convert to Christianity he was baptized in 1923. He was influenced by Christianity on one of his visit to Kohima and soon after his conversion he began sharing about the new religion but often became the object of mockery and ridicule in the village for his efforts.¹⁸

Downs(1971, p.68) had recorded that work among the Angamis was difficult and discouraging, adding that no other tribe or community in North East India was more resistant to the preaching of the gospel. This was rightly said as Khonoma's last convert took place in 2018 and Jakhama still has a community practicing the Indigenous religion. This is interesting because in the history of Christianity among the Angami Nagas Khonoma village is known as the second village¹⁹ where conversion took place while Jakhama occupies the third. Zetsuvi (2014, p.107) comparing the Angami rate of conversion with the Semas and Konyaks reasons that the democratic outlook of the Angamis where decision-making was individualistic made the Angamis to respond at a slower pace unlike the Semas and Konyaks where autocracy prevailed and once a village chief converted the entire village automatically followed suit. Zetsuvi's (2014) comparison leaves us with a question of why then did the *individualistic*

¹⁶ Interview with Pukho Rolnu (93 years old) on 3rd October 2019 at Jakhama.

¹⁷ Interview with Kevikilie Pier (51 years old) on 13th October 2019 at Khonoma .

¹⁸ Interview with Lelievil Yashü (58 years old) on 11th October 2019 at Dihoma.

¹⁹ The first convert was from Kohima village.

Angami not convert quicker when they were at liberty to convert unlike the Konyaks who were bound by the decision of their *Anghs* (discussed in case studies from Longwa and Shangnyu).

Nisier of Khonoma village was already educated before he became a Christian and not all the students converted in the case of Jakhama too; hence education as a socio-cultural factor which can facilitate conversion (Ifeka-Moller 1974) was not very prominent compared to the fact that schools were established by the missionaries in Angami soil as far back as 1884 (Downs, 1971, p.139).

The colonial context of change and Horton's (1971) theory of religious conversion fails to explain the Angami case as this tribe encountered the British by 1832²⁰ and had their villages experience intensive interaction with the colonial power, engaging even in historic battles and had its territories annexed prior to all the tribes; unlike the Sumi and Konyak areas, all its territories fell under British's active administration, still the conversion pace of the Angamis was more staggered.

g) The account of a late convert (Angami)

In Khonoma a 60 years old female respondent ²¹ who had converted very recently talked about the joy that filled her, of finally being able to accept Christianity. She narrated how a feeling of peacefulness had settled over her since then. Upon being asked why she had not converted earlier, she responded that though she was willing to, her husband had refused to convert then. It was only when her husband was severely taken ill, he finally agreed to convert.

Keeping aside the religious experience after the conversion, since the focus here is the motivations that prompted conversion; her account reveals the play of gender in the socio-

²⁰ 'On January 18, 1832 Captain Francis Jenkins and Lieutenant R.B. Pemberton with 700 troops and 800 coolies marched through the Mao and Angami villages from Imphal to Nagaon. Though the Angamis put a strong resistance the well organized British force with superior arms managed to penetrate the Angami hills' (Zetsuvi, 2014, p.41).

²¹ Interviewed on 24th August 2016 , at Khonoma Village.

cultural system. Considering that Naga society is a patriarchal society what instantly surfaces to mind is, whether as in this case where the refusal to convert by the husband restrained the wife to convert too, did the reverse happen in other cases i.e., wives (women) accepting conversion with the decision of their men-folk and not of their own conviction. Clark (cited in Mepfhü-o, 2015, p.373) had earlier mentioned that the missionaries were of the opinion that Naga women were more difficult to convert and that a Christian man with an unconverted wife faces great difficulties in becoming a practicing Christian as he could not prevent sacrifices and offerings performed by his wife. Here, the rituals performed by the woman could have been referred to rituals specific for woman as can be discerned in the following case study. A respondent from Dihoma village shared²² with the researcher that when he married, his wife was a non-convert hence when their children were born, for the first two born children she performed the birth rituals as per the indigenous religion; however when she gave birth to the third child he stopped her from performing it saying “*I am the man of this house and as I am a Christian from now on we will observe only Christian custom in this house*”. What can be constructed from these narratives is that while noting that the percentage of women who converted from their own volition or under the influence of another is outside the purview of our study, women whose father or husband converted were most likely to convert gradually even if they were not responsive initially because in a patriarchal household ultimately, the decision of the man of the house becomes final. The social structure and social relationships were therefore significant dynamics involved in the process of conversion.

h) The account of Tamlu village

According to Reverend Mankap (Around 100 years old)²³ the conversion in Tamlu came in two waves. He said the first instance came through a person named Longna who went

²² Interviewed on 8th October 2019, at Dihoma village.

²³ Interviewed on 7th December 2019, at Tamlu village.

to Impur to study under the influence of an Ao man and got baptized in 1932; the second, when Evangelist Supongwati and Longertangchit came preaching, a man called Yanpong who had lost his son and daughters and was in great sorrow, wondering whether there will be change in this world decided to become a Christian. Both his family and his wife's family declared their intention to embrace the new religion and ultimately a total of six households got converted in 1933. He narrated that the last convert from Tamlu converted around 1950-55, two brothers Hakna (around 90 years old) and Henmoi (around 90 years old). On being asked why they converted he responded that *“Last converts fiercely resisted conversion, but they were marginalised in society; they converted not because of faith in God but the feeling of wanting to integrate with the society.”*



Pic. 3.1: Rev. Mankap (nearly 100 years) a first generation Christian convert from Tamlu village. A pioneer native evangelist who has played crucial role for spread and foundation of Christianity, among the Konyak tribes.

In the case of Longna the school played a role in the process of conversion. In the case of Yangpong's and his in-law's family motivation of life crises and the play of affine kinship ties are visible in the process of conversion. The loss of Yonpong's children impacted not only

Yonpong's family but his in-laws; the Nagas consider affine kins as an in-group extending help and support to each other in life events thus developing strong emotional bonds; this reveals how group members who experience similar emotional crises convert as a group. The last two brothers' conversions at Tamlu, also reveals the family ties in resisting conversion. These points to how family ties influenced conversion in accelerating or resisting it in a family/clan oriented social structure of the Naga society.

i) Account of Shangnyu Village

64 years old, Tzemthak²⁴ of Shangnyu village recounted that in 1963 there was a mass conversion in the village where 90 people converted out of nearly 300 total household of the village then. He said the village was under pressure to convert as all surrounding villages had by then accepted the new faith and the underground (Naga militant group)²⁵ was also pressuring them to convert. A significant account of their village was that though the chief Angh and his clan desisted from conversion, yet the common villagers were directed by the angh to convert. The reason why the Chief Angh and his clan desisted from conversion was to first ascertain whether the conversion would cause any misfortune.

The pattern of conversion in this context shows a very different picture. Integration with the larger community played an important role in this account. The reverse scenario of how the early converts were minorities now plays out here where a non-convert community was pressured to convert and integrate with the majority. However, unlike in the early converts' case where they were ridiculed and often persecuted, the late converts did not face such kind

²⁴ Interviewed on 30th June 2019

²⁵ 'In the 1950s the Indian army began torturing and killing local pastors and deacons; desecrating and burning churches and other Christian institutions as part of their operations. The Nagas understood that the concerted attack on "Christian" religion represented an act of aggression against their freedom to access modernity and therein, define their own identity. The ideological and military campaign of the Indian government to extinguish Christianity among the Nagas fuelled the Nagas greater need to defend it, as it represented their religious freedom 'which invariably becomes tied to other matters of freedom (political). In this context promoting and defending Christianity assumed a priority of utmost significance in the Naga Nationalist Movement' (Thomas, 2017, p.124).

of harassment or ridicule, though the different social activities may have segregated them to certain extent at times. Conversely in Khonoma when a question was asked as to why there were no instances of late converts being harassed or ridiculed for practicing the Indigenous Religion unlike some of the early Christians who had suffered when they were in minority, a female respondent²⁶ responded “*Because deep down in our hearts we all know that is where we came from*”. It is to be understood that though the late converts may have felt the social pressure to convert, they did not face oppositions. A Pastor²⁷ from Khonoma narrated how he made many individual as well as collective visits to the home of a non-convert trying to convince him to convert. It was said that the man finally relented and accepted the new faith only when he fell sick. In reference to the observation of the female respondent above, unlike the early converts, the late/non-converts were never actually harassed or ridiculed by the majority Christians in the village, most probably as the indigenous religion was an autochthonous religion while Christianity was brought in from outside. This may also be the reason why non-converts in Jakhama still co-exist peacefully with the Christian community. In this regard two understandings can be deduced here- on one hand the non-converts do not face hostile attitude from converts, and secondly, a group of non-converts were less likely to convert or take more time to convert than single individual/family.

(j) Account of Longwa Village

The narrative of the history of conversion in Longwa²⁸ village follows that initially some youth from their village who were studying in Mokokchung converted to Christianity around 1968; however they were not allowed to enter the village after their conversion and

²⁶ Interaction on 25th August 2019, at Khonoma village.

²⁷ Interviewed on 25th August 2019, at Khonoma village.

²⁸ Group Discussion with Pastor Yona (37 years old), Yanglang (40 years old) and Honngo (73 years old) on 2nd July 2019 at Longwa.

despite their efforts to spread Christianity in their village they could not do so. The neighbouring Kongan Baptist Church visited Longwa several times and made many attempts to convert them too but the *Ahng* and his council rejected it every time. In 1977 Kongan Baptist Church wanted to send a gospel team to Longwa again, the *Ahng* refused and warned them not to come to Longwa but by then the common people were keen to accept the new religion as it was perceived that the neighbouring villagers appeared to be doing well after conversion. Finally, on 24th February 1978 the Kongan Baptist Church visited Longwa where they met the *Ahng* and his Council. In the ensuing meeting, some elders expressed willingness to embrace Christianity and subsequently on 19th April 1978 seventy four persons from Longwa were baptized and by 1984 the entire village had converted.

Longwa's experience of conversion reveals the dynamics of power and its role in the conversion process. For a village like Longwa where the *Ahng* functions as the supreme authority assisted by his council of elders, all matters concerning the village rests within the authority of the *Ahng* and his council of elders. What could be discerned from this account is that whenever the evangelists visited the village their interaction was limited to the *Ahng* and his council of elders, which may have made it harder for conversion to take place early. Unlike the other tribes amongst the Konyak the *Ahng* is not only the chief but he is considered as endowed with sacredness and as a custodian and symbol of their age old beliefs it was his responsibility to ensure its protection from any threats; hence the rejection of a new religion was justifiable on the part of the *Ahng*. Likewise, the rejections of the new *dhorom* by the *Ahng* reveals why conversion to Christianity came very late in this instance.

3.4. Conclusion

From the above case studies several conclusions can be drawn with regard to the process and dynamics of conversion in Nagaland. Firstly the invisibility of western

missionaries in conversion that took place in villages. Except for conversions which took place in Kohima and Impur where mission centres and schools were located, the conversions which took place in other places were all influenced by native evangelists. Thus, native evangelists played a significant role in spreading the new religion. While schools were agencies through which some conversions took place, the experience of the Angami reveals that schools were not as effective because despite receiving education some of them did not convert. To argue that well established mission centres and schools facilitated conversion may be true for the Aos but for the Angamis who had the same they did not show such result. Therefore, social-structural perspective of Ifeka-Moller (1974) which identified education as a factor of religious conversion was found to be relevant in case of the Aos but not as applicable in respect of the Angami tribe.

The late but mass conversion process of the Konyaks is often generally taken to be a result of its polity where the *Angh's* conversion was a crucial determinant, in comparison with the Sumis which too had a polity of *Akukau* (chieftainship) like the Konyaks. However, the Sumis experienced mass conversion before 1950s whereas the Konyak shows conversion only after the 1960s. The factor of contact and exposure do not appear to be the reason as both share borders with the Ao Nagas, the pioneers of Christianity. In fact Tamlu, a Konyak village had its first convert by 1932. Both the Konyak and Sumis had areas which were left administered which rules out any explanation based on that. The Sumi in its later stage had a mission centre at Aizuto and a mission school which may have accelerated the process of conversion. Historically, the early converts of Christianity among the Sumi were chiefs, which played an important role and probably this is where the difference lay because unlike the Sumi Chiefs the *Anghs* of the Konyaks were considered 'divine' and this may have made it harder for them to relinquish their beliefs for another, being the sacred symbol of their indigenous religion. Individual integration to the society as well as village integration to the larger society also

appears to be a cause for conversion for those who converted late. The internal dynamics of the society itself has therefore played significant roles in the history of conversion in Naga society.

Horton's (1971) intellectualist theory on how people's worldview change with exposure to a wider world and experience of different political and economic development which leads to conversion was found relevant especially in the first ever cases of conversion which is of Hubi (the first Naga convert), Longchanglepzuk (second convert) and Supongmeren (through whom Christianity came to Nagaland). In some, Stark and Bainbridge's (1987, 1996) theory on conversion because of belief in a superior power was found applicable such as in the case of Vikiye the then village chief of Lumami village. Lofland and Stark's (1965) aspects for conversion such as *predisposing conditions* that is attributes of persons prior to conversion and situational contingencies that is *turning point* in life crises situation etc were also found to be applicable. The idea of *sustained interaction and familiarity* which Snow and Machalek (1984) explained as cause for conversion was also useful especially in some cases of conversion. Besides the social structure of the society that is family and kinship relationship, gender relation and the political dynamics of the society also played crucial role in the conversion process among the Nagas.

The experiences of conversion, thus, appear different from tribe to tribe and case to case; hence a single explanation does not suffice to explain conversion in Naga context. However, two factors stands out prominently that is, firstly, the early converts soon after their conversion began evangelising others; hence despite many other factors on which conversion may have been initiated this single factor is responsible for how Christianity swept through Nagaland within less than a century. Secondly, without a doubt conversions began amidst major socio-political transitions in the Naga hills heralded by the coming of the British colonizers.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHRISTIANITY, DESACRALIZATION AND CULTURAL CHANGE

Undoubtedly, Christianity has been the single most important catalyst in the lives of millions of tribes living in Northeast India today (Subba et al, 2009, p. v).

In any case, there is no doubt that Christianity initiated a process of far reaching social and cultural consequences among the Nagas (Kikhi, 2009, p. 259).

4.1. Understanding Change, Christianity and Secularization

Human societies are dynamic by nature, every known society in history has undergone change and societies are expected to keep on changing if they thrive to persist. The pace of change however, or the factors which brings on the change and the areas it impacts differs from society to society. Changes can take place in diverse ways even within a particular society. The change which pertains to the change in the social arrangements of a group or society is considered as social change. The nature of change in a society is either bound to be a gradual diffusion of new values and institutions or a sudden disruption of the social system. When change takes place in society in a gradual diffusion it is to be expected that the society may not face much complexities in adapting to the new values or institutions whereas when a sudden disruption takes place within a social system the particular society if ill equipped to adapt with the new system may face traumas and complexities in the aftermath. Ogburn (1950) used the concept of *cultural lag* while trying to explain social change. According to him a *cultural lag* exists when two or more social variables which were once in balance or adjustment becomes maladjusted due to their difference in rate of change. Material culture for that matter is quicker to change whereas non-material culture is slow in its change hence it may raise a cultural lag between the two although they were in accordance at a certain time or space. Oommen (2009, p.5) notes that, “If all cultures are dynamic, that is, they tend to change although at differing paces so is the case with different dimensions of culture. The conative dimension which relates

to everyday life- eating, dressing, worshipping and the like- is likely to change at a faster pace as compared with the cognitive and normative dimensions.” There are many factors, endogenous as well as exogenous that can process social changes. Historically, religion has been one of the most important factors in sustaining the socio-cultural status quo of societies because of its ability to evoke a sense of reverence for tradition and continuity from its adherents. At the same time, societies have also experienced changes initiated by religion/religious activities.

The lives of tribal communities of India, especially of North East India, have undergone massive quantum changes since the 19th century. In analysing changes in individual culture Sinha (2009, p.16) suggests “to draw the bench-line as close as possible to the earliest form of undiluted cultural traits.” For most tribes of North East India especially in the context of Nagaland the introduction of Christianity marks the beginning of major cultural change. It is on the premise that there has been a change in the Naga society with the coming of Christianity that the data for this chapter was collected. Christianity for that matter is credited as the harbinger of change in many indigenous societies whether in America (among Native Americans), Africa or Asia where Christianity made inroads into the socio-cultural life, at the heels of European colonialism.

Dalal’s (2011) work *The Impact of Colonial Contact on the Cultural Heritage of Native American Indian People* evidenced the close alliance between colonialism and Christianity; she argued that Europeans who initially landed on Native American peoples soil for trading became more interested in acquiring land and expanding their settlement and ‘one of the methods to achieve this was through conversion to Christianity’. The Christian missionaries wherever they took the initiative for fulfilling the conversion had a view which saw the ‘adoption of Christianity as a break with the past’ (Laugrand, 2012, p.4) ; essentially it implies for the new converts a breakaway from their native socio-cultural set up to a new

socio-cultural life as endorsed by the Christian missionaries. This change resulted in the dichotomy of ‘traditional’ and ‘modernity’ as traditional became associated with the native culture and modernity became synonymous with Christianity. Thus, the concept of transition from ‘traditional to modernity’ became popular in the study of conversion to Christianity. Baker (2016) emphasized that Christianity played a significant role in Korea’s modernization by introducing monotheism, by creating self-conscious members of specific religious communities, making religious rituals participatory, bringing change in public visibility of women and contributing to the birth of democracy in Korea. As discerned here Christianity exhibits the values of modernity of ‘human emancipation, agency and self –mastery’ (Laugrand, 2012, p.11); in societies where such aspects were not visible earlier, when introduced, Christianity and modernity began to be viewed as one. Tiênou (1992) reflected on this complexity in his work on ‘African Christianity’ stating that Africa experienced modernity and Christianity as part of the package called “the colonial situation”. Laugrand (2012, p.12 [citing Durkheim and Dumont]) asserted that Western societies developed strong conception of individualism derived from Christian morals which considered the value of the individual to be superior to any other. He further elaborated that this is why there is a general idea that modernity has a Christian face, he argues in his observation of the Inuit that “Individual emancipation may be a modern and Western concept but many societies developed other forms of individualism, which we tend to ignore. They (Inuit emphasis my own) consider themselves as modern but they do not give much importance to individual emancipation versus familial or kin connections, and always stress their cultural differences.” He therefore proposed the notion of “plural modernities” which he reasoned was more appropriate when dealing with multiple societies.

In the recent decades the missionary perspective of conversion and study of Christianity has received counter narrative as scholars became concerned with how unlike the

former notions of seeing Christianity just as the harbinger of ‘everything good’ in the communities it encountered, these communities were in reality undergoing complex socio-cultural processes as it tried to negotiate between the changes the societies were experiencing with the adoption of a new religion. Dennis (1997) mentioned diffusion, acculturation and transculturation as categories of cultural change that occurs as a result of contact between societies. According to Dennis (1997) when majority culture traits diffuse a society on a massive scale – acculturation frequently is the result. In such a situation the culture of the receiving society is significantly changed. However, there often is a syncretism, or an amalgamation of traditional and introduced traits. He further explains while acculturation is what happens to an entire culture when majority cultural traits overwhelm it, than transculturation is what happens to an individual when he or she moves to another society and adopts its culture. The studies on impact of Christianity on societies which experienced conversion to Christianity therefore were scrutinized at first through social anthropological theories with concepts of acculturation, cultural contact, syncretism and cultural change. Laugrand (2012 , p.5) however notes “These terms have been replaced by new ones such as incorporation, religious dialogue, indigenization, translation, and conversation...”thus the new trend emphasis more on the negotiation, participation and response of the native communities as opposed to the earlier notion of being simply imposed with Christianity. These trends further indicate that there are layers/nuances of socio-cultural processes involved in a society’s experience of change, especially a religious one which is often enmeshed with the idea of identity, cultural values and social structure. In this context Sahay (1966) in his study on the Uraons identified five cultural processes- oscillation, scrutinization, combination, indigenization and retroversion to analyze the impact of Christianity. Accordingly ‘oscillation’ was defined as ‘the nominal affiliation with Christianity and partial understanding of it, which implies deep-rooted attachment to Sarna traditions and a resultant conflict with Christianity

which were prone to surface in troubles and crisis incidents'. 'Scrutinization' was further broken into 'elimination' which stands for conflict with Christianity and disapproval of Sarna elements, also a sense of distinction from the Sarna Uraon upon experimentation and 'retention' which meant social approval of Sarna elements upon rationalization. 'Combination' was the introduction of new Christian elements, 'Indigenization' was the persistence of indigenous cultural values and beliefs and 'retroversion' was the re-evaluation of indigenous cultural beliefs and practices.

The thesis of secularization became popular in the sociology of religion in the 1960s with Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy* (1967) where he defined secularization as '...the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols'. Over the years the term has been found to be ill-defined and been utilized to signify different things by different schools of sociological theory (Porter, 1973, p.67). There have also been debates regarding the validity of the state of its existence which Rodney Stark reflected was at its demise as is dramatically concluded in his piece *Secularization, R.I.P.* (1999) "After nearly three centuries of utterly failed prophecies and misrepresentations of both present and past, it seems time to carry the secularization doctrine to the graveyard of failed theories, and there to whisper *requiescat in pace*." However, despite the many misgivings and speculations with regard to it, 'secularization' according to Demerath (2007, p.77) is critical in understanding the historical dynamics of a culture. This is particularly relevant to a society which has experienced conversion to Christianity since historically secularization is closely associated with Christianity. Swatos and Christiano (1999, p. 209) noted that 'the term secularization was given to us by Max Weber (1930) but ever so lightly' an extension of this significant fact of history is found in Bruce's (2006, p.414) observation that "Following Max Weber, the American sociologists of religion Peter Berger (1967) has argued that the monotheism of Judaism and Christianity contributed to the rationality of the

West. Bruce further agreed that "...the rationalizing tendency of Christianity created space for secular alternatives (2006, p.414)." For Weber it was the rationalization of action which enabled the modern world to come into being, the resultant of rationalization on the other hand was 'disenchantment' which implied that people no longer valued the concept of mystery or "the mysterious" itself (cited in Swatos & Christiano ,1999, p. 212). The intricate historic relationship between Christianity, secularization and modernity thus makes the concept of secularization and modernity an indispensable tool of analysis in the study of Christianity. The varied meanings of secularization which followed post-Weber's idea made Shiner (cited in Porter, 1973, p.67) to suggest abandoning the concept entirely. However, acknowledging that too much literature exist already and that a change of the terminology would not resolve the problem he proposed drawing the lines on three basic meanings: *transposition* (aspects of religious belief or experience shifted from a sacral to a purely human context); *desacralization* (loss of the sense of the sacred); and *differentiation* (religious norms and institutions become distinct from secular ones).

4.2. Christianity and its Cultural Impact

The impact of Christianity in Nagaland is presented in this chapter by examining various processes involved in the socio-cultural change in society as aforementioned. However without being selective of any of the processes in terms of its oldness or newness related to anthropological study of Christianity the concepts will be applied. Hence, despite the understanding that concepts such as 'syncretism' falls under the old themes, the focus here being on identification of the socio-cultural processes that prevails with the impact of Christianity in the society, the term will be applied for analysis whenever appropriate. Likewise, the other concepts shall be used in argument to ascertain its relevance in the Naga experience of Christianity.

The following section discusses the impact of Christianity in contemporary socio-cultural life of the Naga people, juxtaposing it against their indigenous worldview.

4.2. 1. Contesting Worldviews and Theology

A worldview is an inherent feature of every belief system. Worldviews are comprehensive meaning systems that locate all experiences of the individual and social group in a single general explanatory arrangement (Berger & Luckmann 1966 cited in McGuire, 2012, p.27). All religions provide a worldview- a set of beliefs about a group's or individual place in the world.

In the indigenous worldview the belief in a Supreme Being prevailed among the Angamis, the Sumi and the Konyaks. The Supreme Being among these tribes, however, differed again as the Angamis believed the Supreme Being to be in a spirit form and identified as a female deity while the Konyak and the Sumi on the other hand believed the Supreme Being to be a male deity. The concept of 'the creator' among the three (Konyak, Angami and Sumi) tribes were not separated from the Supreme Being, but for the Aos the creator deity did not enjoy the status of being a Supreme entity. With the coming of Christianity the Supreme Being who is a male deity is considered the creator of everything. This has in-turn brought the Nagas under the canopy of one belief system which has united them into one single community- Christians. The identity of belonging to the same group has thus helped abandon the erstwhile practices of inter-village/tribe wars, dispelling fear of 'the other' and initiating more peaceful relations and interactions between villages and tribes as well.

On the other hand epistemologically the indigenous belief suffers as the monotheistic worldview of Christianity is considered 'the only true belief' and hence the earlier beliefs of the Nagas are deemed as 'demonic worship' or 'worship of devil'. While the colonial administrators had no regard for the indigenous beliefs it was the Christian missionaries who

ensured that the supernatural beings in the indigenous belief were relegated to such a status. The Christian missionaries impressed on the Nagas that the Christian God was the only Supreme God, that He was a God of love unlike their gods which needed to be appeased constantly with sacrifices lest their wraths were incurred. They also emphasized the idea of personal salvation, related to the concept of heaven and hell as final adjudication for their deeds on earth. One of the tactics that the missionaries used to win over the Nagas to Christianity was therefore a comparison of their theology. In this aspect, Christian missionaries claim their faith to be superior replete in the idea of a supreme being who was the creator of the entire universe, in contrast to the Nagas' indigenous belief ensconced in a worldview which encompassed only their immediate surrounding area. Horton's (1971, pp. 45-46) intellectualist theory explains conversion as a shift in the cosmology where a traditional cosmology consisting of a two tier system i.e., the microcosm (with the lesser spirits having more prominence in their everyday local life) and macrocosm (the belief in the Supreme being as concerned with the whole and distant from their everyday life). With exposure to the wider world the local life experienced different political and economic development and as the local people began interacting with people outside their microcosm, the microcosm explanation of events became implausible; hence the reasoning that the lesser spirits retreated and the Supreme Being took direct control of their everyday life appears relevant here. It may be noted that the Angami, Konyak and Sumi already had concept of a Supreme Being and while the Sumi God was a distant God, the Konyak and Angami deities were already part of their everyday life. However, as beliefs in their Supreme deities were confined only within their own tribes, the Christian God which was deemed to be the Supreme Being and creator of all people/tribes must have become more appealing.

To reiterate it, it was not just the missionaries' insistence that made the early Naga converts to adopt the Christian worldview. In the face of crises such as sicknesses or deaths as

discussed in the preceding chapter many of the Nagas lost the intrigue of ‘mystery’ (Weber) in their indigenous belief; besides, incidents where the western missionaries were able to triumph when engaged with something they feared helped develop the respect for the ‘new worldview’. Thus, Weber’s idea of ‘de-mysterization’ took place where the Nagas by rationalization became disenchanted with their own beliefs. This also co-relates to Sahay’s (1966) concept of ‘scrutinization’ and ‘elimination’ where elimination of previous religious traditions occurred upon scrutinization.

Theologically the missionaries rejected the Naga beliefs, but in practice they followed the method of syncretism in the nomenclature of the supernatural beings. For instance, the Supreme Being in the Sumi belief, *Alhou* was retained as the nomenclature for the Christian God. Similarly, for the Konyaks and the Aos too, the indigenous nomenclature of Kahwang and *Tsungrem* respectively, remain intact. Interestingly, while for the Sumi and Konyak the function, form and status of their earlier deity appears not to change, in the case of the Angamis it entailed an evolution of nomenclatures¹, gender (from a female to a male) and form (from a spirit to anthromorph). For the Aos a lesser god was elevated to the status of a Supreme Being. These syncretism when studied did not follow a uniform pattern in context of beliefs, as the function, forms and status of the supernatural beings of indigenous beliefs appeared to be valueless in the Christian belief and only the names appeared haphazardly inserted into the Christian beliefs. The use of indigenous nomenclatures appears well and good in context of Christianity being indigenized by the Nagas. However, the haphazard appellation of indigenous supernatural without retaining their true form and value has acute adverse implications on the

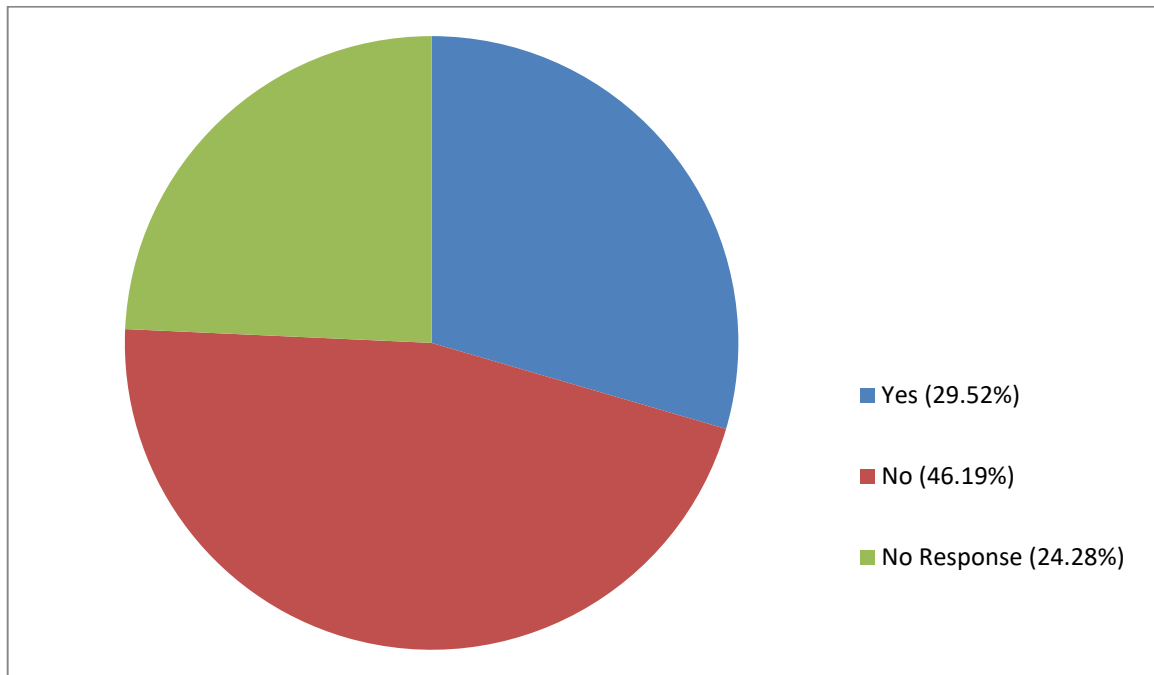
¹ The name Ihova was introduced to denote the Supreme God in Angami in 1890 by Stanlely Rivenburg, the missionary at Kohima , when he translated the book of Matthew into Angami . This was later replaced by Ukepenonpfu (the female diety in Angami indigenous belief) in 1918 by J.E.Tanquist the fourth missionary sent to Kohima , to introduce a term which was more familiar to the Angamis .However, on realising later that Ukepenonfu denoted a feminine nomenclature , this was abandoned. Ihova was then reinstated with a new spelling ‘Jihova’ (Eaton, 1984, pp.40-42).

indigenous religions. Here, an explanation of haphazard is considered due. The Konyaks and Sumi retained their Supreme deities in name, form, function and value. The gender form of the Angami Supreme deity was biologically altered and terminologically changed frequently that now it's not clear whether the Angami indigenous supreme deity was retained or discarded during these evolutions. The main problem, however, is when the case of the Aos is juxtaposed with the other tribes. The Ao god *Tsungrem*, who was a god nonetheless but not a Supreme being in the indigenous belief was designated a Supreme being in the Christian cosmology. The Ao gods' counterparts who were known as *Terhuomia* among the Angamis, among the Konyaks *Yaha* and the Sumis *Tughami* or *Aghau* are designated as devils or evil spirits in the Christian worldview. Any rational individual would question how it is that a category of the same beings of a particular religion (indigenous religions) were promoted or demoted to a status of difference in another belief system (Christianity); in other words, what was the rationality on which these differences were identified? There is no rationality as no common ground could be found on which these differences were created, hence the observation that the nomenclatures were inserted haphazardly. The haphazard appellation of the indigenous supernatural beings has now implicated two complexities – firstly, the indigenization of Christian beliefs has been built on the distortion of indigenous beliefs, hence while Christianity proceeds with its well assorted native names of the Supreme deities and diabolic ones according to its convenience, it has left behind indigenous religious traditions in shambles. Secondly, the diabolical tag of the supernatural beings in the indigenous beliefs resulted in an indigenous people's view for its religion and its culture as diabolic, which has in-turn adversely, affected the narratives of their history. During the course of fieldwork it was found that the respondents in general while referring to their indigenous religion tend to say “*when we did not know god*” “*when we used to worship the devil*” and “*before we took up faith*” or simply referred to it as ‘animism’ implying it was not a real religion. This has severe impact on a culture which was

so interwoven with its religion. Hence, there are staunch Christians today who advocate complete rejection of the ancestral cultural values such as the use of traditional attires, ornaments and ornaments which have had adverse economic and cultural consequences.

The primordial belief about the creation of the earth and the origin of ancestry are simply considered as ‘stories’ in the light of Christian belief. The concept of heaven and hell is now clearly defined where the righteous are believed to be taken up to heaven and the unrighteousness will burn for eternity in the flame of hell. The indigenous belief in the land of the dead where life was expected to continue as in the earthly world has been replaced and with it the sacredness attached to the sacred spaces such as the valley of the dead has dissipated. Life on earth is seen as a fulfilment of God’s purpose and a test for eternity and the Christians strive for personal salvation. Regardless of the pervasiveness of Christian belief and practices, some elements of the indigenous beliefs clearly persist among the Nagas. For instance, in indigenous religious system the belief in ancestral spirits prevailed, which is considered heretic in Christianity. However, in the present study when a question was proposed to the respondents with regard to whether they believe in ancestral spirits, 29.52% responded in the affirmative, while a large majority at 46.19% said they do not believe in ancestral spirits. It may be noted that a significant number of respondents at 24.28% did not give any response.

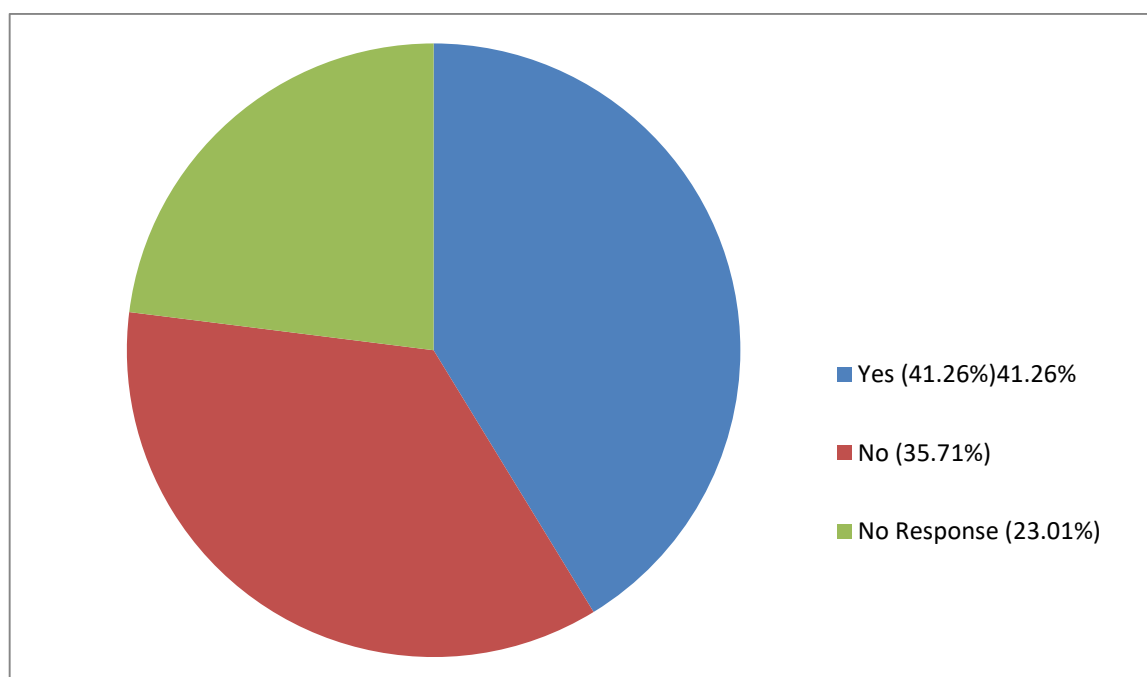
Fig. 4.1: Belief in Ancestral Spirits



The above data indicates that while a majority of respondents professed not to believe in ancestral spirits, yet it is evident that a significant number of respondents still do. Besides, the percentage of the respondents who deigned, not to respond were quite substantial implying that many Nagas were uncertain in this regard.

Along these lines another question was posed to determine their belief in omens; accordingly the respondents were asked whether they believe that certain signs could reveal future events. To this, 41.26 % responded in affirmative while 35.71% responded in the negative to the question. A substantial number of respondents at 23.01% did not respond.

Fig. 4.2: Belief in Omens



Thus indigenous belief in omens where future events could be predicted by reading the events and incidents appears to prevail even after coming of Christianity.

Besides, there is a renegotiation to connect the indigenous beliefs to Christianity. For some, the perspective is that though the worship was misplaced (i.e., worshipping the spirits) the rituals performed are akin to the ones practiced in the Old Testament (Epao, 1993). A 93 years old respondent² from Jakhama said that he *felt the love of God* even in his old religion. The first instance reflects the attempt to find legitimacy for the indigenous beliefs and practice by linking it with Christianity. The second depicts how the narratives are changing now presenting the presence of the supreme spirit (Christian God) even in the space and time prior to coming of Christianity itself. Hence, an attempt of retroversion (Sahay, 1966) where aspects of indigenous beliefs are re-valued is discernible.

² Interviewed on 3rd October 2019, at Jakhama village.

Christianity is theologically considered to be a superior belief system and the Nagas are theoretically said to have abandoned all their 'animistic beliefs and practices' however, in the lived experiences of the Christian Naga it is found that there is syncretism of indigenous and Christian worldviews. There are also elements of retroversion of indigenous beliefs which are altered to fit the Christian cosmology which possibly evolved due to the realisation that complete abandonment of their indigenous beliefs could result in the total loss of their cultural heritage and history.

4.2. 2. Christianity and Life Cycle Rituals

In traditional Naga society life cycle rituals were elaborate and distinctly marked the transition in an individual's different phases of life. It also reflected their social structure and served to renew bonds of kinship solidarity and identity. Life cycle rituals are greatly determined by one's belief system hence in the context of the Naga tribes, it is deemed imperative to unravel how Christianity has impacted the life cycle rituals which once operated under the direction of indigenous beliefs.

a) Birth

The tradition of observing ritual days, the number of which was determined by gender, at the birth of a child has now been discarded completely. The rituals observed with regard to food at the time of birth are not followed stringently too. However, despite the strong influence of Christianity many women still believe in avoiding taboo food at pregnancy. They avoid consuming the meat of wild animals for fear of infecting the child with the trait of the animal consumed. Besides, men folk also admitted to avoiding killing of snakes while their wives were pregnant. Nivili (76 years)³ of Lumami village affirmed that the belief about being infected with animal traits on consumption of its meat, or if the animal is killed while the wife being

³ Interviewed on 14th August 2019, at Lumami village.

pregnant, as true, by illustrating a true life story of a man whose father shot a bird called *atui* when his mother was pregnant with him; the child was said to have acquired the traits of the bird which was known to abhor its own offspring(s). The story went that, the man was likewise cruel to his own children. Such narratives seem to affirm the belief in food taboos at pregnancy. However, the question of whether to observe food taboo or not appeared to be an individual choice as, according to a 58 years old respondent⁴ “*nowadays almost everybody consumes if they want to, I ate too without any fear.*” Thus, there are people who observe it and there are some who don’t; hence, an observance of multiple cultural patterns is now visible. The continuation of food taboos during pregnancy by some Naga women indicates the co-existence of indigenous belief with the Christian religion.

Post-birth christening of children still adheres to the indigenous norms of naming. Among the Konyaks and the Aos, a child is given a name within three to four days after birth, whereas the Sumis do so after the lapse of at least a week but before a month. In the case of the Angamis a child is named immediately after birth. Hence, the pre-Christian norms of post-birth rituals are still maintained by the Nagas.

Significant others in the child’s life, either patrilineal or matrilineal elderly kin members usually confer the names. Names are still chosen with relevance to lineage, events and goodwill; however a new trend after the advent of Christianity has been the use of biblical names such as Joseph, James, John etc which are popular for boys, while Mary, Ruth and so on are given to girl child now. A significant change after Christianity has been the integration of the child into the society through the church. The child’s name is now registered in the church once the christening takes place. Amongst the Ao the Women Department (Church) visits the child and issue a certificate; for the Konyaks the Women Pastor along with female

⁴ Interviewed on 11th October 2019, at Dihoma village.

relatives are invited during the Christening. While for the Sumi the 'Church staffs' are invited and preferably the Pastor performs the christening rite. After christening the name is then submitted to the church and as soon as the child is capable he/she begins attending the Sunday school.

Two aspects can be noted here. On one hand, the social structure has continued undisturbed with familial and kins identifying and accepting the new member of the clan by giving a name. In this way the naming of a child is a *rite of passage* through which a new member becomes inducted into the clan. On the other hand, the naming of Biblical names for a child as well as the role of the church in christening now reveals the other identity of the child – i.e., a Christian. The participation of the church in the christening reveals that the rite of passage of a new born child is not just an induction into one's clan but an induction into the Christian community too.

While the Christian element is thus very significant in christening, the indigenous culture of the role of family and kins in the rite of passage remains prominent. Awareness of gender equality is now being promoted by discarding the rituals related to gender distinction and differences, while identities related to family/clan/communities through names are still continued. Fear of consuming tabooed food during pregnancy and childbirth appears to be on the wane in general, practiced by some women as a matter of personal choice, not as a norm. The reason for this difference was found to be because of family socialization i.e., being imparted with the belief by the elderly family members (such as parents /grandparents) which creates fear psyche towards such food.

b) Marriage

In pre- Christian Naga society marriage was an important institution that had social, economic and religious implications. It was through marriages that families created alliances

and loyalties sustained. Apart from the social security it manifested, marriage provided opportunities for elevation of not only the social and economic status but of ritual status too. An important ceremony of the Nagas commonly called the *feast of merit* which was a *rite of passage* celebrating a man's accumulation of wealth where he would attain a new status and enjoy better privileges could not be observed by an unmarried man. The dead body of an unmarried woman (spinster) was considered taboo to be buried within the village, and hence buried outside the village.

Clan exogamy was a common marriage regulation observed by all the tribes, the infraction of which entailed banishment from the village. As for the forms of marriage, Angamis were monogamous, so were the Aos by custom. The Konyaks and Sumis accepted polygamous marriages though in practice only few (particularly the Chiefs and affluent) could afford it. It may be pointed out that the Konyak and Sumi have similar polity of chieftainship, perhaps factors of owning larger assets, requiring more hand to run the estate as well as the need for heir or more heirs led to polygamous marriages among these tribes. In the present study, all respondents agreed that marriages still adhere to clan exogamy and that if intra-clan marriage takes place, the concerned couple was excommunicated from the church as well. After the advent of Christianity the consequences of infraction of clan endogamy however differs among the tribes; for instance in context of the Angamis a respondent from Khonoma ⁵ noted that there was one case of clan endogamy in their village, wherein the couple was excommunicated from the church but not from the village. Similarly, among the Sumi such a case will lead to excommunication from the church, but its infraction alone do not suffice for banishment from the village any longer. Amongst the Aos and the Konyaks it leads to excommunication from the church as well as banishment from the village still.

⁵ Piers 51 years old, Interviewed on 13th October 2019, at Khonoma village.

Monogamy is now the only accepted form of marriage. Hovili (94 years old)⁶ from Lumami narrated that when her father converted to Christianity, he was in a polygamous marriage with two wives and he had to divorce one of his wives.

Similar to the Pre- Christian pattern of considering a marriage which fulfils the prescribed rituals and ceremonies to be of greater ritual significance and social prestige, the church marriage (a marriage ceremony which is officiated by a priest) now remains the only socially acceptable form of matrimony- the form of marriage which has social prestige and ritual value. Any other kind of marriage leads to excommunication from the church resulting in social and ritual degradation. Therefore, in matters of belonging or banishment from the community, the role of the church appears most prominent.

With regard to dress and ornaments during the marriage rituals, some Nagas today opt for a blend of modern-traditional attires where as some completely adorned only in western style of clothing such as a white wedding dress for the bride and a tuxedo for the groom. The observance of an engagement day, use of wedding rings during wedding ceremony, as also the use of wedding cakes, are today all optional and entirely dependent on one's personal choice and economic standing. A notable change in marriage rituals among the Nagas now is the visibility of individualism, which manifests distinctly accounted for by factors of education, position, exposures to other cultures, etc., of the people concerned.

Even in a Christian marriage the rituals of proposal, the venue of marriage ceremony, engagement, bridal procession and spending the wedding night were found to still differ among the tribes. Even within the same tribe there is variance in details of marriage rituals such as in clothing, gift exchange, observance of bride price, observance of engagement day etc.

There has been a change in the food items used during marriage; most notable is the discontinuation of rice beer, a traditional brew used extensively in olden days. Modern

⁶ Interviewed on 14th August 2019 at Lumami village

commodities have become closely tied with marriage rituals now either in terms of food consumption or as gifts. However, items such as gift of indigenous shawls and others which have latent identity purposes are found to be continued. The continuities can also be found in patriarchal dominance in the mode of marriage procedure. For instance, marriage proposals are still initiated by the groom's side. Maintenance of a social structure where family and clan are identified is found continued. Tribal distinction is still visible, for example, bridal procession of the Sumi still do not involve the father; though not followed by, only one of the parent among the Angami continues to accompany the daughter on her bridal procession. Among the Konyaks only the female relations escort the bride on the bridal procession. Because of the growth of individualism and inter-tribal marriages Naga marriages are now characterized by multi-culturalism, despite adhering to the same religion i.e., Christianity, there are variances in many aspects of marriage rituals observed.

c) Death

In the death ritual a distinct change after Christianity among the Aos and Konyaks is the burial system. The earlier system of drying out the corpse on high built *machang* (platform) among the Aos and Konyaks is now completely discontinued and the dead is buried. However, a unique pattern that has developed among the Konyak is the burial of dead body and the setting up of memorial stones, in different places, while the Angamis bury their dead without closing the coffin. The Sumis and the Aos both practice the maintenance of a common graveyard and the indigenous belief of extending the cemetery, the consequence of which is believed to affect more death, still persists. The Angamis of Jakhama follow the maintenance of burial ground on clan lands, whereas of the Angamis in Khonoma a respondent⁷ remarked "*In Khonoma it is the Church which maintains the burial ground and this must have started when the earlier*

⁷ Interviewed on 13th October 2019, at Khonoma Village.

converts who were treated as outcast from the clan and community could not be buried in their clan lands anymore.”

A common custom has developed among all tribes where the indigenous shawl is draped over the dead body, a male shawl for the male and female one for the female. Placing of flowers inside the coffin as well as on top of the grave is also common post-Christianity practice. On the other hand the custom of ‘giving’ things to the deceased has continued most prominently among the Konyaks and Angamis though in an evolved form. While articles which were earlier given for use in ‘the other life’ are discontinued, meaningful things such as the deceased’s favourite or personal items were found to be buried with the deceased now. Lelievil (58 years old)⁸ recalled that when her mother died (in 2000) they placed her favourite scarf and her purse in the coffin. In the course of the current study a grave of a young man who had died in March 2019 in Mon district was sighted with clothes hung around the thatched walls surrounding his grave (**Pic. 4.1.**); similarly, in Jakhama a guitar was found hung on the grave of a young man who had passed away in 2015. These practices appear to reflect sentimental attachments but nonetheless akin to the traditional practice of placing personal possessions of the deceased on their graves signifying their status and achievements.

⁸ Interviewed on 11th October 2019, at Dihoma Village.



Pic. 4.1: The grave of a young Konyak boy, who died in 2019, in Mon district. The thatched wall covers the burial ground whereas the memorial stone lies beside it. The clothes belonging to the deceased can be seen hung over the grave.

Among the Sumis *Apukhoye* (a memorial feast held for marking the final departure between the dead and the living) which was earlier held on the third day is still observed. However, the *apukhoye* is now observed the day after the burial. In this regard, a Pastor from Ighanumi village⁹ said he did not really wish to partake in such events but out of consideration for the living members he feels obliged to attend/participate. A 58 years respondent¹⁰ of Dihoma village recounts that her mother, in her death bed had a specific request, that “*when I die prepare a feast and give all at least a plate of food, to all those who help to dig my grave.*” Memorial feasts are organised by the Konyaks, the time being of no limit; a case in point may be cited here as narrated by a respondent from Mon¹¹ according to whom, though his mother passed away in the month of June, due to financial constraint he could hold the memorial feast only in December. For the Konyaks, it was on the memorial feast day that the memorial stone for the grave is prepared. A pastor¹² speaking of memorial feast among the Aos of Changki

⁹ Interviewed on 24th Novemeber 2016, at Ighanumi Village.

¹⁰ Interviewed on 10th October 2019, at Dihoma Village.

¹¹ Kanwang (50 years old) , Interviewed on 3rd July 2019, at Mon Town.

¹² Interviewed on 30th November 2019 , at Changki Village.

village said *“The memorial service Iapuqu is held three days after one’s death, the relatives gather and have food. Our church is mana (meaning taboo probably derived from Assamese word mana meaning the same). But, these days it’s a little twisted. They will request for Prayer service if they are family I cannot refuse, than I go unofficially.”*

An 84 years old respondent¹³ of Molungyimsen said when her daughter died her husband and his clan following the traditional rite went to the village pond to wash their hands, similarly when her husband died her sons did the same. A pastor ¹⁴ from Molungyimsen said that when his father died his other clan members went to Milak river to wash their hands but he did not join them because following traditional rituals was discouraged for a Christian. These are all instances where family and clan solidarities are reaffirmed. The continuities in death rituals are found to be those which are attached to familial or kin structure. There appears to be differences between religious practitioners (church authorities), and common people on continuing such rituals as religious practitioners do not want to associate with such rituals but common people engage in it as such are tied to family obligation. The religious practitioners on the other hand find it difficult to castigate such rituals and at times find themselves in difficult position as they do not approve of it but find themselves in an obligatory position too to engage in it as a family.

Accidental deaths such as drowning, in the woods etc which were earlier considered taboo deaths and were not allowed to be buried within the village have been discontinued. Now, the Pastor gives the last rite of the deceased; however when one is not a Christian or not a member of a church (such may be in the case of when one is excommunicated) the proper rite is not followed. Death rituals after the advent of Christianity, identifies a Christian from a non-Christian as well as a Christian member of a church to a non-member of a church. Hence,

¹³ Interviewed on 19th June 2019 , at Molungyimsen Village.

¹⁴ Interviewed on 19th June 2019, at Molungyimsen Village.

there is a change of worldview from identifying the sacredness of an individual through incidents to a worldview that accepts the Church's authority in determining a person(s)' spiritual status. Moreover, a spinster's death is no longer considered taboo and in a departure from indigenous practice of burying outside the village gate, she can be buried in the common village cemetery. This reflects an alteration in the perceived ritual status of individuals across gender and marital status.

Death rituals post-Christianity involves formal funeral programs where singing of hymns, and sermon of a pastor, have become the norm. A notable feature of the funeral rites that point to the persistence of indigenous belief system amidst the Christian practice is seen in the practice of speaking parting words to the deceased by friends and family members, normally after offering eulogy to the departed one

The public announcement of death in the village has changed from log-drums to the Church bells. Sumis ringing the church bells – five chimes for females and six chimes for males, the Angamis of Khonoma ring the bell at urgent pace when there is a death, and the Angamis of Dihoma ring the bell for a longer time in case of an elderly or a matured person and a shorter one for the children. Though the church bell has replaced the log drums of announcing death what has continued is the significance of social distinction such as identifying gender and age in the society simply through the duration and quantum of chimes.

To sum up, contemporary death rituals among the Naga people exhibit both change as well as continuity. While the practice of burying the death followed by all the tribes is evidently an impact of Christianity, other accompanying elements affirm that indigenization has taken place. What stands out clearly from the present research is the presence of conflicting values between Christian practitioners that are keen to follow an exclusive Christian model devoid of

any pre-Christian influence, and the people who want to continue indigenous practice and rituals, especially on matters that were related to family and clan solidarity.

4.2. 3. Education and Literacy

The formal education system was introduced in the Naga Hills funded by the British Government and managed by the missionaries in 1870s. Missionary project of developing the Ao literature had started in Sibsagar and implemented at Molungkimong in 1872 when the missionary couple Rev Clark and his wife Mary began to teach the converts about the new religion. Translated work on biblical stories and other lessons written in Ao language were imparted; besides inclusion of calendar days, months and years, counting in numbers, singing of hymns, teaching, reading the alphabet - the missionary teacher using textbook written in roman scripts (Imkongmeren, 2013, p.137). By 1894 a training school was opened in Impur by Perrine¹⁵, in 1926 a separate girl's school was opened (Downs, 1971, pp.117-120), and higher school was established in 1924 by G.W. Supplee¹⁶. In 1948, the government took over complete management of the educational institutions (Downs, 1971, p.143). By 1923 the mission were running 208 schools serving nearly 5,438 pupils, the Impur and Kohima mission school became the up-gradation from the village schools. Eaton (1984, p.9) notes that the village school was the chief institution through which both education and Christian conversion was effected.

¹⁵ S.A. Perrine was an American missionary sent to work among the Aos in 1894.

¹⁶ G.W. Supplee was a American missionary who joined the Kohima Mission in 1922.



Pic. 4.2: A wheel which was part of the first printing press Dr Clark brought and set up at Molungyimsen in 1883.

The trio of Mr Clark, Godhula and Supongmeren had introduced the first ever reading, writing in Ao-mother tongue (Imkongmeren, 2013, p.137). Literature works on translation and composition began with the missionaries learning the local language. In 1889 Rivenburg¹⁷ reported that he was attempting to reduce the Angami to a written form (Downs, 1971, p.140). In the case of the Sumi tribe Bible translation and preparation of a hymn book was begun in 1930s, and in 1939 the four Gospels and Acts were published (Downs, 1971, p.153).

After graduating from the mission schools the graduates typically joined government services or returned to the village as primary school teachers (Eaton, 1984, p.11). Thong (2009, p. 32) notes that the school was the nucleus of proselytizing practices and Christianity, where mission schools produced young Naga converts who were then trained for religious positions as preachers and teachers. The education system with its employment opportunities led to a new class of people which were not prevalent in the traditional economic or social structure.

¹⁷ Sidney W. Rivenburg was an American missionary who joined the Kohima mission in 1887.

The schools replaced the old *morung* system of socialization and training of the youths; in the schools the medium of learning was English and subjects such as arithmetic, bible lessons and hygiene were taught (Eaton, 1984, pp.10-11); a far cry from the oral narratives that were shared in the *morung* where handicrafts were practiced and work was assigned in peer groups.

The school going youths were no longer expected to engage in agriculture works and it became the mark of educated people to dress in western habits. Education gradually empowered the Nagas to stand for their own rights and to make their own choices and student unions became effective power players of this. One of such was the Konyak Students Union which was formed by the Konyak students who studied in Impur Ao Mission Centre. There was no school in Konyak villages then, students from Tamlu and Kanching village upon returning to their villages decided to form a student's body in 1946 to promote social, religious and cultural activities. Additional student organizations from neighbouring villages were formed soon after. The apex organization of the students became known as the Konyak Students Union. The union became instrumental in imposing upon the Konyaks to follow the burial system, prohibited the practice of taboo and fixing a uniform day for celebrating *Aoleng*, the biggest Konyak festival. The educational institutions became spaces which has brought the different tribes together unlike the pre- Christian times when clans, *khels*, villages, tribes were confined to their own *morungs*, possibly it was these interactions which must have aided the Nagas in developing a one nation identity historically. Achumi (2012, p. 92) notes it was the educated Nagas who spearheaded the formation of Naga Club, Tribal Council and the Naga National Council.

The formal education system has been instrumental for inculcating universal values to the Nagas, and can be said to have both positive and negative impact. On one hand, it has open vistas to other worlds; inculcated ideas of self-determinism, hygiene, modern political and economic system, while on the flipside Christianity initiated western education has served to

largely alienate the Nagas from their rich cultural heritage. The formal mode of education has not taken into account the Naga oral narratives nor does it cover any substantial and informative detail on Naga socio-cultural history. The attitude of respect for formal education, which is essentially western, has in turn developed into respect for western lifestyle such that western lifestyle and western culture has become the mark of what is 'standard' in the Naga society. Education has given rise to new social groups in the Naga community such as the students union, the modern elite class, as well as creating school drop-outs and educated unemployed. The complexities related to these groups are outside the purview of this study but the resultant varied groups indicate both the positive and negative impact of education in the society. What can be noted here is that new forms of social differentiation have emerged in Naga society, with level of education becoming a primary determinant of social position and status.

4.2.4. The Church

Congregational gathering began in Nagaland in 1872 in a small chapel of Molungkimong village. The churches at present are of different denominations. In the initial years of shifting loyalty to a new denomination there were tensions and conflicts, and the early converts who were still in minority were often persecuted. Such issues have long been resolved and people enjoy the freedom of aligning themselves to any denomination now. However, despite the freedom the shifting of denominations are very sparse and found to be only in the instance of marriage, relocation to a new place, a spiritual experience or because of some dissatisfaction in the previous church.

Every Christian Naga is expected to be a member of a church. As a child one is a part of the children department and attends the Sunday school, as one grows up, though there is no age limit most Nagas in their late teens undergo Baptism. The Baptismal certificate is issued by the Church where baptism is taken and this certificate serves as official record of one's

membership in the church. In contemporary Naga society membership in the church is taken very seriously and non-member of any church does not enjoy good social standing in the community. In other words he/she is considered more of a social outcast. Hence, besides providing spiritual guidance the church has come to occupy the role of regulating social control and itself become an institution of social control. For instance, the members of a church maybe excommunicated on grounds of violating exogamy rule, marrying without the sanction of the church, extra-marital affairs, or some other crimes. There appears to be no clear dividing line between the authority of the village council and the church on the issue of excommunication, and while in some instance, the two institution work in tandem and cooperation, at times overlapping of authority could also be discerned. For instance, in a divorce proceeding which took place in Lumami on August 2018¹⁸ the village council excommunicated the divorced man from the Church and from the village for five years on ground of adultery by engaging in extra-marital affair. While there is an observance of the continuation of the customary law with regard to divorce, in this case the Village Council appears to be the authority of the church too as it determined the number of years ‘the man’ was to be excommunicated from the church without any consultation with the church. Rather, the decision of the village council regarding the excommunication was communicated to the church after it was taken. Thus, while there is cooperation between the village authorities and the church with regard to matters related to religious, moral and social issues there are also instances where the secular authorities override the authority of the church even in matters that concern the church.

With regard to the structural organization of the church, a pastor normally heads the church, assisted by a board of deacons which constitutes the decision making body. For long, the deacon boards of churches in Nagaland had remained exclusively male bodies and it is only in recent years that some churches are inducting women into this apex decision making body.

¹⁸ Participant Observation on 9th August 2018, at Lumami Village.

In the present study, of the many villages studied, the researchers found that only one church in Changki village had women deacons.



Pic. 4.3: A Church Building in Molungkimong village (the village, where the first church in Nagaland was established in 1872).

The church through its weekly programs and Sunday Devotional Services apart from other Special Programs the year round, provides a public space for all members irrespective of age, gender and status to come together as a homogeneous group. The church plays a significant role in the life cycle rituals of all members, to the extent that such observances without the participation of church are frowned upon in society. In the event of excommunication period of an individual, the church would not participate in any ceremonies or rituals associated with the person. The segregation of members from non-members of the church continues beyond this life; point in case may be cited of Changki village, where in the cemetery, it is seen that on the epitaph of unbaptized individuals or those who died while under excommunication period,

the symbol of the crucifix/cross is not etched, unlike the other tombstones which all carries the crucifix. Marrying outside or within the norms of the church also has a bearing in other symbolic rituals. For instance, among the Sumis when a couple marry outside the church *ameshi* a traditional custom of distributing meat to the bride's relatives is restricted. Thus, the approval of the church has become vital in determining one's social status, besides affiliation to a church is now the ultimate proof of being integrated to the society.

4.2.5. Family

The family norm in Naga society remains a nuclear, a patriarchal and a patrilocal one. When a man and woman marry they leave their family of orientation and set up their family of procreation. However, unlike in pre- Christian times, the children now stay at home with the parents and not in the *morung*. Family or household rituals are now closely associated with the church; for instance on successful construction of a new house, in contrast to the olden ways of performing rituals and offering sacrifices, church members are now invited to proffer the dedication prayers, often accompanied by a feast; such is the case for other significant events in the family like academic success of children or other auspicious days. The family home still continues to be a religious space too. The present study found that in Christian households, it was generally the mother or wife who initiated religious activities at home, which is a distinct departure from the indigenous religious system where initiation of religious rituals had been a male privilege. Orientation towards religious values and worldviews of children starts from home, as most respondents affirmed that they first heard about God at home- a clear indication that parents are crucial agents of religious socialization.

4.2.6. Dress and Ornaments

In the initial years of conversion to Christianity Naga converts were required to discard their ethnic attires and ornaments since it had religious significance with their indigenous

belief. The Christian Missionaries understanding the attachment of the clothes and ornaments to their religious belief called for complete abandonment of those. Education was also another agency through which the ethnic attires were given the nod to be discarded. Attending the Western Missionaries School was not permissible in indigenous attires, and the mark of an educated person soon became identified with western clothing. During the *Revival Period*¹⁹ when mass conversion was taking place, a huge number of ethnic attires and ornaments were burnt and abandoned as a sign of conversion. The traditional attires were progressively replaced by western wear. Of late, there has been a resurgence of reviving the ethnic attires and ornaments, in part because it's perceived with tribal identity, but these are now symbolic of a secular cultural identity and cannot be claimed to have religious significance. The creation of traditional attires or ornaments today is devoid of any ritual connotations. Though some religious practitioners like pastors do disapprove of traditional attires in its entirety, it does not deter people, especially the women, from donning it, even to churches though most stop short of adorning themselves with indigenous ornaments to churches, reserving it for other cultural events like festivals. A respondent (retired pastor)²⁰ from Changki commented that “*we do not wear traditional attires in churches we use it only during festivals, during merry-making; we just use it for fun.*” As such, ethnic attires and ornaments are used during festivals, during cultural programmes such as in educational institutions or often in secular settings, but these are representations of ethnic identity i.e., tribal identity and devoid of any ritual significance.

¹⁹ The period of 1950s and 1960s are regarded as period of regional revival because of the increase in conversion and expansion of church in Nagaland. Whereas, the period of 1976 – 1982 is regarded a period of national revival where church growth and Christian population was at its highest moreover this period was particularly marked by experiences of Holy Spirit.

²⁰ Interviewed on 1st December 2019, at Changki Village.



Pic. 4.4: A Sumi couple²¹ attending Sunday church service at Lumami. The woman can be seen wearing the traditional *mekhela* of the Sumi with a combination of western wear. The man can be seen attired fully in western wear.



Pic. 4.5: A Sumi couple (The same couple from **Pic. 4.4**) attending Tuluni festival at Lumami. The man can be seen attired in western attire with a modern ethnic jacket. The woman can be seen adorned in a traditional necklace and ethnic shawl.

²¹ Mrs Shivili and Mr Nikeshe Kinny (Asst. G.B Lumami Village).

4.2.7. Architectural Design

The architecture of houses has changed completely in urban areas and in most villages as well. During the course of field work for the present study, except in Shangnyu village and Longwa village in Mon district, the traditional style of constructing house was not seen in other villages. In the Ao villages, the village council halls were constructed following the traditional artistic style though the materials used have changed. In Angami and Konyak villages the *Morung* are still maintained though it no longer functions as a dormitory, it is used for political and social meetings. These *morungs* were found to be maintained *Khel-* wise (sector) such as in Shangnyu. Males alone partake in the necessary discussions; the men-folk make use of the *morung* especially during festivals or when there is an issue to be discussed within the colony.



Pic. 4.6: The inner chamber of a *morung* (boys) in Tamlu which is still taboo for women to access.

In Tamlu, the researcher visited a *Morung* which still has artefacts from the traditional period, the guide provided information that women are normally not allowed to enter the inner

area of the *morung* but as a guest the researcher was given the privilege to access and take some pictures.

Like the *morungs* of the Konyak, *tehubas* of the Angami (Pic. 4.7) are scattered *Khel*wise around the village, and during the field visit to Jakhama, some women were observed sunning themselves by the *tehubas* under the winter sun. Akin to the *tehubas* of the Angamis, in Ighanumi village, unlike other Sumi village they had traditionally build the *apukito*, a sitting area exclusively for males, perhaps under the influence of Angami custom, as it lies in close proximity to Angami areas. Though the *apukito* no longer serves any other purpose then simply for sitting yet it is still considered improper for a grown up women to occupy a seat in *apukito*.



Pic. 4.7: A *Tehuba* in Khonoma village with the circular sitting area of stones which are unique to Angamis.

With regard to the churches, most exhibit western architectural designs and every building owned by the church including the Church staffs' residences, the guest house etc are devoid of any traditional/ethnic touch.

It was found that among the Konyaks, the outer walls of some residential houses were adorned with skulls of animals killed during significant events and festivals including Christmas. The other tribes do not have a significant display of such albeit few homes in the

villages of Dihoma and Lumami where skulls of wild animals were seen hung on the outside walls of some homes.

4.2.8. Food and Drinks

In traditional Naga society food taboo was prevalent and strictly enforced, for certain occasions, events, clans or gender. Infraction of such taboo was held to invite misfortune not only to the individual concern, but extended to one's clan or even village. After Christianity the taboo associated with food are no longer mandatory though in everyday life one can still notice continuities of the earlier taboos. For instance, among the Sumis young girls were forbidden from eating the chicken legs and they grew up being reminded of it; so much so that they actually develop abhorrence towards it and even today many girls adhere to this taboo. Again among the Sumis the non-incubated eggs (when the mother hen ignores it) or incubated but un-hatched eggs of a chicken are to be consumed only by the elderly and it still found to be followed by many. On being queried about taking traditionally tabooed food during pregnancy a female respondent from Dihoma²² responded that *"nowadays almost everybody consumes if they want to, I ate too without any fear."* Religion wise there is no more restriction, however, based on personal choice and certain social conditioning it is to be noted that some still uphold the taboo practice related to food.

One of the most prominent discontinuities related to food after Christianity is the complete restriction of the locally brewed drink – called *Aji* (Sumi). It is religiously considered a sin to consume it on account of its intoxicating affect. The village councils strictly prohibit the selling of it in their vicinities and impose fines on the violators, the Church condemns any such indulgences. However, it is pertinent to point out that during festivals there is no legal restriction on the brew, though the church disapproves of it.

²² Interviewed on 9th October 2019, at Dihoma Village.

4.2.9. Observance of Festivals

The prevalence or observance of indigenous festivals differs among the tribes and among villages of the same tribe now. For example among the Aos in Changki village the pre-Christian festivals have been abolished completely whereas in Molungkimong village *Moatsu* and *Tsungremmong* festivals are organized by the village councils. Among the Angamis *Sekrenyi* continues to be observed. In Changki village where the indigenous festivals have been abolished completely, Rev Tzudir²³ said of this “*Since it is holiday we organise seminars and meetings on such days instead.* In Molungkimong during *Moatsu* and *Tsungremmong* festivals are organized church representatives are invited for invoking blessings. Some reflections of the change with regard to observing traditional festivals are given below:

*“Such festivals are secular cultural events.”*²⁴

*“These are now accompanied with more prayers.”*²⁵

*“It is celebrated but with no religious significance.”*²⁶

Among the Konyaks in Tamlu village *Aoleang* festival is still observed where sector wise there is a collection of money and a feast prepared. Similarly among the Sumis too, festivals of *Tuluni* and *Ahuna* are observed accordingly, and sometimes the village organizes it together. Though other taboos associated with the festivals were not relevant anymore, it was found that the Sumis abstain from field work on such days. Festivals are times of strengthening social solidarity and goodwill in the village. One way of doing it was through distribution of meat portions to members. In the course of the fieldwork in 2019 the researcher participated in the *Tuluni* festival held at one *asa* (colony) of Lumami village and the proceedings are given

²³ Interviewed on 1st December 2019, at Changki village.

²⁴ Bendangsenla (Women Pastor), interviewed on 17th June 2019, at Molunkimong village.

²⁵ Piers (51 years old), interviewed on 13th October 2019, at Khonoma village.

²⁶ Lelievil (58 years old), interviewed on 11th October 2019, at Dihoma village.

briefly thus: on the day, two pigs were slaughtered with contribution from the residents, and this was followed by gifting of meat portions to significant persons of the *asa* residents which are as follows- the head was gifted to the host of the *Tuluni* feast, a leg portion was gifted to *akukau* (village chief), another leg to the village council chairman, and one leg to the youth pastor who was invited for invoking blessings.

Over and above the indigenous festivals, the most important event for the Nagas post-Christianity is Christmas now. It is celebrated across the society with programmes, often accompanied by a communal Christmas feast that can be sometimes sponsored by individual members of means. In addition, other religious occasions like Easter and Palm Sundays which are very significant for Christian all over the world are observed with much enthusiasm and fervour.

4.2.10. Women and Church

With the coming of Christianity and the abandonment of rituals directly tied to the indigenous religion, the rigid distinction of male and female identities since birth has waned. Access to formal education by all irrespective of gender has enabled women to pursue professional and other economic activities. Women now enjoy greater freedom and ability unencumbered by ascribed traditional roles based on indigenous religious beliefs and the earlier attitude that they should be confined to domestic arena does not hold true any longer

Nevertheless, in matters of decision-making authority, men continue to hold sway and major decisions are made by them. This is also reflected in the religious sphere of church where women in leadership role was rarely visible. Speaking of the absence of Women in positions of authority within the church structure an ordained female respondent²⁷ said “*The traditional concept that women are not supposed to lead is still very strong. Men do not accept much and*

²⁷ Rev. Imlila (57 years old), interviewed on 3rd December 2019, at Changki village.

women do not push forward. Out of tradition men and women's roles are still confined." She also affirmed that she had been serving as the Women Pastor for nearly 22 years now. After being ordained Reverend she had performed the ritual for *The Lord's Supper* once but has not been entrusted to perform *Baptismal* yet.

Other instances of marginalization may be drawn from the ceremony of *The Lord's Supper*²⁸, an important ceremony held in the Church, during which the pastor, aided by the deacons, distributed wafer/biscuits (symbolizing the body of Jesus) and grape juice (that symbolizes the blood of Jesus) to the baptized members of the congregation. The privilege of presiding over this symbolic ceremony is rarely given to women leaders and the present study found that except for the Baptist Church in Khonoma which had occasionally allowed deaconess from women department to participate in the serving, the rest had no history of women doing the serving. The case of *The Lord's Supper* clearly brings to light that while the task of serving others under secular settings is largely expected of women, in the sacred space of the church however, a reversal of roles is observed. This affirms that roles are social constructs, and in this instance, the social role of religious leadership under indigenous religions has been carried over to the new religious system of Christianity.

²⁸ *The Last Supper* in the Bible accounts as the final meal Jesus shared with his disciples before his crucifixion. Christians now commemorate *The Last Supper* (it is also referred to as Holy Communion) where breaking of bread and taking of wine symbolizing Jesus's broken body and blood are observed.



Pic. 4.8: A ceremonial ritual of *The Lord's Supper* observed at Shangnyu Baptist Church , Shangnyu Village.

Women are found to play active roles in supporting the church and its activities contributing to its sustenance and growth. While the multitude of taboos associated with women under the indigenous religions are no more, however patriarchal expression of male authority has continued in the Church structure as women are found to be experiencing glass ceiling and in terms of leadership they are yet to enjoy the same opportunities/status as men in the Church. Universal values of gender equality and individual worth are yet to be fully realized as notions of leadership appear to be still ingrained in traditional mindsets.

4.3. Conclusion

On examining, the different socio-cultural aspects of Naga society, after the advent of Christianity, the argument tilt towards the fact that Christianity is indeed the catalyst for cultural changes in Naga society. However, Naga people have not totally parted ways with their indigenous beliefs, in contrary to the general notion that with Christianity Nagas have completely abandoned their traditional beliefs and practices. The study has found that there persists an underlying continuity of beliefs, practices and traditional value system. The problem, however, is that the idea that traditional culture is 'heathen' had been popularized during the initial evangelizing days and with few Christian religious practitioners still

preaching it the syncretism between the traditional culture and Christianity is yet to be accepted in theory. A separation between the traditional culture and Christian culture has developed in the minds of the people such that observances of traditional practices is regarded today as purely secular acts, not imbued with religious significance. The Nagas have acculturated a theology that the indigenous traditional culture has no ritual significance. Therefore, despite the dawning realisation of the need to preserve their ethnic identity and history, it is reiterated that observance of indigenous festivals, donning of traditional attires or ornaments, etc., is devoid of ritual significance and relegated to the secular sphere. Observance of indigenous festivals, wearing of ethnic clothes, or ornaments etc is purely secular acts without religious connotations. It may be argued that a process of secularization has taken place in the Naga society where indigenous beliefs and practices co-exists alongside Christian culture, but with the former falling under the category of secular and the later regarded as endowed with sacredness. Unlike in the traditional past where everyday life was imbued with religious significance, Christianity has ushered in a dichotomy between sacred and profane, and along with it secularization process has taken place. Shiner (cited in Porter, 1973, p.67) redeveloping the earlier definitions of secularization proposed drawing the lines on three basic meanings: *transposition* (aspects of religious belief or experience shifted from a sacral to a purely human context); *desacralization* (loss of the sense of the sacred); and *differentiation* (religious norms and institutions become distinct from secular ones. In the Naga context the shifting of indigenous beliefs and practices from a sacral to a purely human context is observed along-with the loss of the sense of its sacredness; additionally, the religious norms and institutions have become distinct from secular ones. Hence, it can be said that *transposition*, *desacralization* and *differentiation* are operating in Naga society as a consequence of the introduction of Christianity.

A combination (Sahay, 1966) of western culture and indigenous custom is found in the society. Ideas related to modern ideals and rationality are also functioning in the society but not completely free of indigenous values of patriarchy, clan solidarity and tribal identity. Laugrand (2012, p.12) argues in his observation of the Inuit that “Individual emancipation may be a modern and Western concept but many societies developed other forms of individualism, which we tend to ignore. They (Inuit emphasis my own) consider themselves as modern but they do not give much importance to individual emancipation versus familial or kin connections, and always stress their cultural differences.” He therefore proposed the notion of plural “modernities” which he reasoned was more appropriate when dealing with multiple societies. In the context of the Naga Christians too, identity negotiation as well as the combined practice of social and cultural values reflects a state of plural “modernities” rather than being confined to strictly ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’.

The inability of the people to forsake their traditional culture completely on one hand and the acculturation of Christian culture, which is strongly influenced by western culture, while on the other regarding it as superior in terms of ritual has given rise to prevalence of multiple cultural practices even within the same tribes now. Family, clan and tribal identity are still very prominent and it is the social structure which has appeared to have undergone the least change with the persistence of patriarchy as the overarching ideology characterized by the invisibility of women in the religious institutional set up. Many changes have taken place in the material culture such as architectural design, adoption of western attires and lifestyle, etc., whereas aspects of continuity can be found in the intangible cultural values such as family values, clan solidarity, tribal identity etc. Hence, Oommen’s observance (2009:5) that “different dimensions of culture change at a differing pace and that conative dimension relating to everyday life- eating, dressing, worshipping and the like- is likely to change at a faster pace

as compared with the cognitive and normative dimensions” is found to hold true for the Naga’s experience of socio-cultural change.

In the following chapter an examination of religious values and everyday life follows to ascertain the extent of secularization among individuals of contemporary Naga Christians, this would further help test the hypothesis whether the everyday life of contemporary Nagas are influenced by religion after coming of Christianity.

CHAPTER FIVE

RELIGIOUS SOCIALIZATION, VALUES AND PRACTICES

If religion is in fact an integral part of personality, individuals might have a greater tendency to act on their religious commitments in secular settings (Porter, 1973, p.72).

5.1. Introduction

Every religion has certain core values which are essential for its adherents to practise. All religions attempt to influence the everyday life of its adherents; the ability on the part of the adherents to practise the religious values in their everyday life in turn reveals the integration of religion in an individual's life and in a society.

Weber (1930) in his most significant work *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism* work writes "We are interested rather in something entirely different: the influence of those psychological sanctions which, originating in religious belief and the practice of religion gave a direction to practical conduct and held the individual to it." This was interpreted further by Bendix (2016: 272-273) as "...impulses which originated in religious belief and the practice of religion, gave direction to the individual's everyday way of life and prompted him to adhere to it." While in Durkheimian (1915) context everyday way of life is a *profane* domain; the mundane activities of everyday life become sacralised when guided by religious values and for religious purpose in Weber's idea. Koev (2015, pp.249-250) elaborating on Weber's notion of rationalization notes that through ethical rationalization and systematic action the *everydanese* (the world) becomes transformed motivated by a transcendent value core i.e. *extra-everydaynese*; the core value which stems from 'within' guides an individual in his/her conduct , thus producing what is considered as 'religious virtuous'. Thus, the transformation of mundane everyday life into a religious virtuous life is determined by the application of religious values in one's action, attitude as such.

Sahu (2002, p. 1237) expounds value as an enduring belief which plays a vital role in guiding one's actions, attitudes, judgement etc. He further classified two types of value (1) Religious value: Religious values are ethical principles founded in religious traditions, texts and beliefs (2) Social Value: Social values are a set of moral principles defined by the society dynamics, institutions, traditions and cultural beliefs. Thus, an individual may be guided by either value (or not) in most cases the two may overlap. In the context of the present study, a separation may be differentiated between the two by categorizing values dictated according to the Christian faith (which can be discerned from the Bible) as religious value and the values which are not prescribed in the Bible *per se* but upheld by the society as social value. A religious person will be led by religious value and meaning orientation (Dvoinin, 2013, p.301) rather than by other value or orientation. For determining the influence of religious value in guiding an individual's action, attitude, judgement etc, Zhuravleva (cited in Dvoinin, 2013, p.299) contends that "The structure of a person's value orientations is understood as a hierarchy of values which is defined through the ranging of them by the person himself." While it is apparent that the religiosity of an individual can be best discerned by the individual who weighs his/her own action, attitude or judgement against what one considers religious value or other value, the lack of proper teachings of one's concerned religion may sometimes set their religious values as different from the real principles as prescribed in their religion, hence it becomes crucial to understand the knowledge of an individual's idea of his /her religious values as prescribed by an individual's religion as well. Porter (1973:72) emphasised study on the personality system to determine the influence of religious values and orientations in individuals stating that the personality approach relates closely to secularization on the cultural level, since culture exerts influence on social systems in part through the normative orientations of individual actors. As religious values are not inborn traits but are learnt, in order to examine the influence of religion in an individual life, it is pertinent to understand how the religious

values are being internalized by the individuals. In the light of the above discussed, this chapter attempts to examine the mode of religious socialization and how everyday lived experiences of the respondents are influenced by religious values. It is expected to throw light on whether the everyday life of Naga Christians are imbued with religiosity and conformity to religious ethics in a bid to comprehend whether secularization is a reality in the Naga context.

5.2. Religious value and Everyday life

Value is an integral part of personality which gets expression in preferences, it creates response disposition which has distinct influence in one's choice (Sahu, 2020, p.1237). In everyday life an individual is faced with many choices; as humans go through different stages in life, major decisions related to career, marriage etc which cause major changes in one's life has to be made. Then there are choices related to food habits, clothing, leisure etc which in a small capacity may not mean much but which, when repeatedly observed becomes a part of the individual's identity reflecting the individual's core values. Thus, in order to determine the influence of religious value in the everyday life of contemporary Naga Christians, significant aspects related to choices, value orientations and practice are pursued as follows:

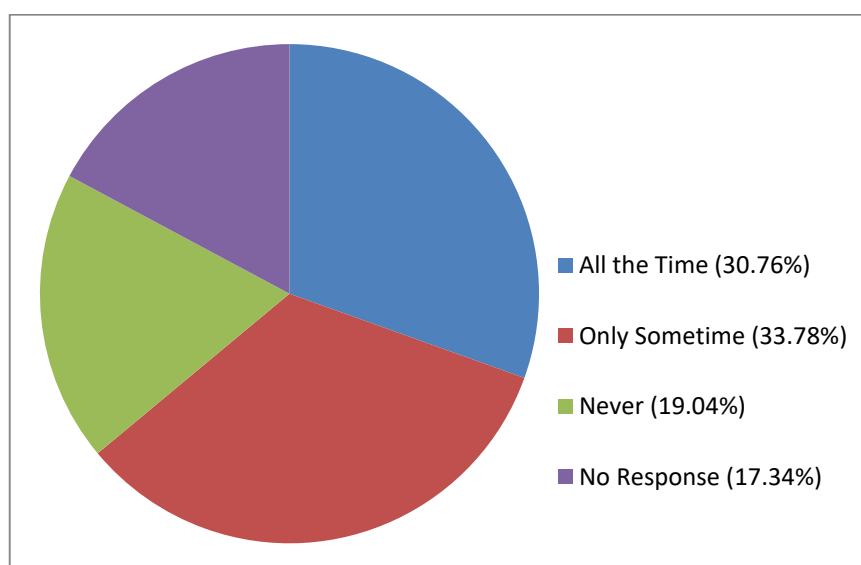
a) Religion and Major Life Decisions

Decisions with regard to marriage, choosing a profession, building a house, buying property, etc., are significant aspects which a Naga adult faces in life; for most, such decisions are crucial because it would imply a change in one's social status. For instance, with regard to marriage, though there are few individuals who prefer to remain unmarried the social norm of the society is for an individual to marry 'in time' and begin a family. Hence, one has to deal with decisions of choosing a life partner, when to marry, how to marry and so on. Choosing a profession is also vital in an adult life as being economically independent is the ideal situation. With globalization and modernization and scope of small business opportunities besides

employment in the government sector (which has often been plagued with issue of backdoor appointments) there are employment opportunities in private sectors such as in educational institutions, in marketing etc; therefore question of ethics with regard to what kind of profession one opt for and how to start one's business in case of self employment or the nature of business to engage in, even the mode of employment opted for are all crucial decisions encountered by an individual. Acquiring property or constructing houses are reflections of one's economic status in Nagaland as is in most societies. Individuals who are economically independent and affluent enjoy more respect and privileges in the society, acquiring of new properties impacts the social position of an individual or family but requires huge financial investments; therefore decisions related to such issues are not easy.

In light of the above, the respondents were posed with a query as to whether they rely on religion for guidance while making major decisions in life. As shown in **Fig. 5.1**, 30.76 % individuals agreed that they rely on religion all the time to make major decisions in life, whereas 33.78% said they rely on religion sometime but not all the time, 19.04% said that they never rely on religion to make such decisions while 17.34 % gave no response.

Fig. 5.1: Reliance on Religion for decision-making



What can be discerned from the above data is the fact that a majority of respondents do not depend on religion actively to take life decisions. Just about one-third of respondents feel the need to rely on their religiosity while making decisions. One can conclude hence that religion does not appear to play a primary role in the decision making process of most Nagas today.

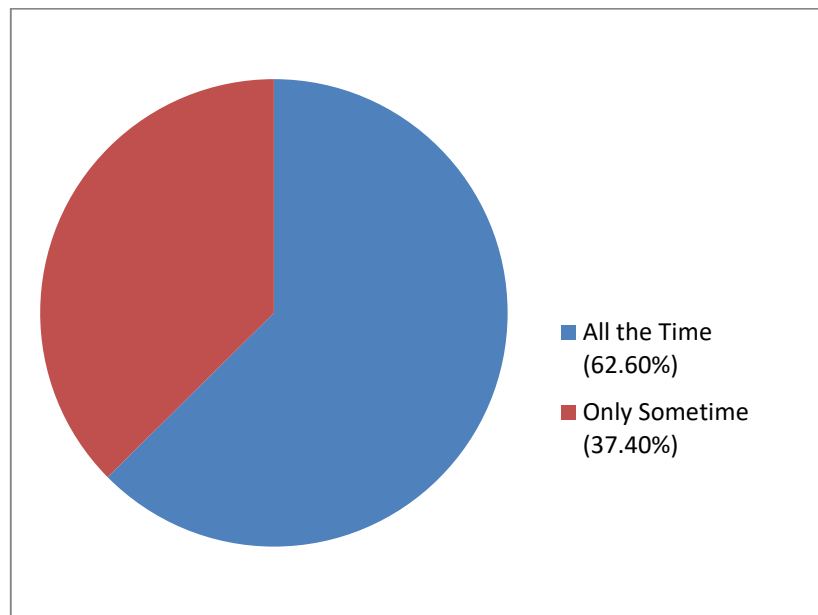
b) Naga Christians and Tithing

Giving tithe is an obligatory offering for all Christians with biblical roots. The Bible, the holy book of the Christians, prescribes in Leviticus 27:30 “One-tenth of all crops belong to the Lord, including the crops from fields and the fruits from trees. That one-tenth is holy to the Lord.”¹ With the monetization of economy, and agriculture no longer the only livelihood for subsistence, ‘crops’ are now interpreted in monetary terms too. With the advent of Christianity, Nagas have also adopted this obligatory religious practice and generally tithing is expected to be made to the local church where one has membership. Sermons from church pulpits extolling the virtues of tithe-giving and the blessings to be accrued through it to the believers are a common feature in churches. As a matter of fact, tithes, besides other offerings, are the primary source of sustenance for all churches.

With regard to tithing a majority of the respondents at 65.59 % affirmed that they gave regularly, whether it was in terms of a monthly salary or annually. 37.40 % respondent however, even though they felt obligated, could not give regularly due to financial difficulty; so they gave the tithes as and when their financial situation allows them to.

¹ The Holy Bible, New Century Version (2005) p .114

Fig. 5.2: Practice of Tithing



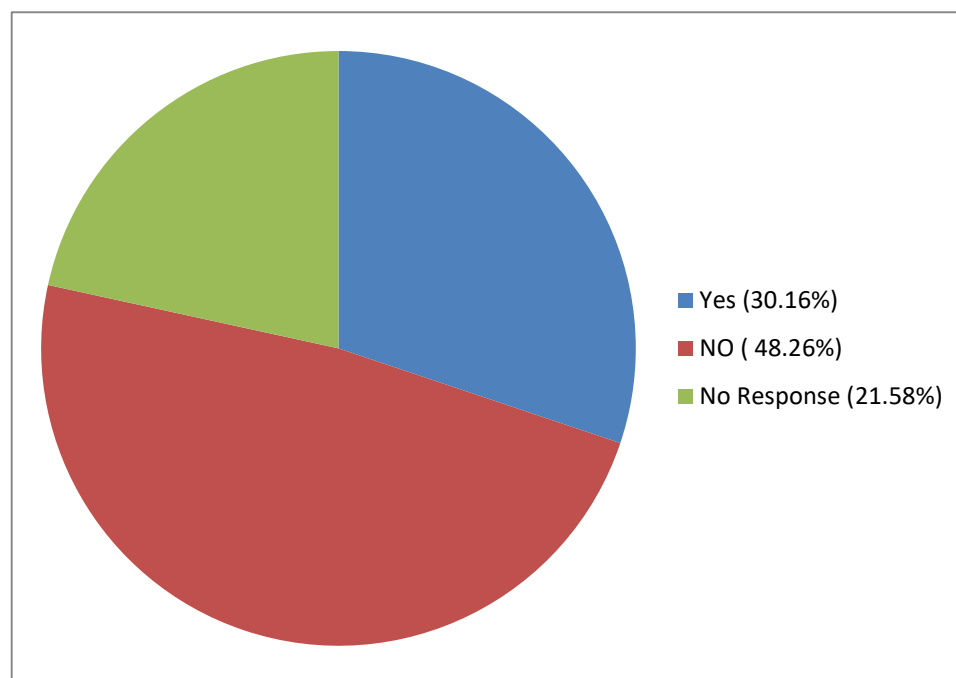
So while the religious requirement of tithing was known by all, practical life situations appear to dictate whether they adhered to these Christian principles or not.

c) Religious Values and Clothing

Clothing is closely related to religion, certain clothes are marked for rituals and ceremonies signifying the ritual status of the wearer; other clothes such as the robes of the Buddhist monks or the habits of a Christian nun conveys the spiritual commitment of the one who wears it. While Hindu ascetics forgo clothes as a symbol of renouncing the world, Christians relate nakedness with 'sin and shame' and emphasis on proper covering of the body. In the context of the Naga Christians as discussed in the preceding chapter the traditional clothes and ornaments of the Nagas were recognised as having close link with their indigenous religious beliefs and were condemned by the western missionaries; this led to a lack of clarity over what constitutes 'proper' clothing for the Christian Nagas when their traditional attires became associated with the heretic, in other word, a 'sin'. Another form of clothing which was deemed 'improper' for Christian women in Naga society, particularly in rural areas, is donning of trousers to church. On the matter of whether one's dressing style was influenced by religious

consideration, most of the respondents at 48.26 % (Fig.5.3) replied in the negative, implying their religious values do not dictate what they wear. Whereas, 30.16 % respondents affirmed that they dress in accordance with what is considered ‘appropriate’ as per Christian principles, and 21.58% gave no response.

Fig. 5.3: Influence of Religion on Clothing



In contemporary context there are opposing opinions even between religious specialists (Priests/Pastors), those who hold the notion that traditional clothes and ornaments represents ‘demonic culture’ as stated by Reverend Kiewhuo² or those such as Reverend L.Moa (58 years old)³ who opined that wearing it does not contradict one’s Christian faith as he opined *“our clothes, our ornaments is like our identity, we don’t restrict the use of it , it is our clan identification and it is not related to animism , if we lose it we will not have our culture”*.

² In his Sermon given on 7th October 2019 , at Koinonia Prayer Centre Kohima.

³ Interviewed on 1st December 2019 , at Changki Village.

Related to this Rev. Imna Tzudir (69 years old)⁴ from Changki village stated “*Traditional attires and ornaments –we do not use much as the Sumi, there is no mana (taboo) for using it but we use it more only during festivals*”, this statement can be taken in light of the fact that traditional attires and ornaments are reserved more for festive occasions (such as weddings and festivals) or for communal gatherings (such as funeral service. In the course of the study the researcher observed that a Sumi Baptist pastor⁵ adorned a traditional necklace, on account of *Tuluni* while holding church services.⁶ Likewise, among the Sumis similar to the Aos and Konyaks, the Baptist denomination do not express any reservation towards the use of traditional attire and ornaments, however the revivalists⁷ are known for discouraging the use of it especially in churches; but this appear to be based on biblical interpretation of avoiding adorning oneself with excessive ornaments rather than because it is traditional. Hence, the different attitude in use of ethnic attires or ornaments among the priests appeared to be because of denominational differences as well.

In terms of the aspersions cast on traditional attires by the Christian missionaries, it appears to have been selective which can be seen from the fact that traditional shawls and mekkelas (a woven wrap-around used by females) of women are till date used extensively by all the womenfolk, both inside and outside churches. However, while there is no open religious restriction on the use of indigenous ornaments, an underlying understanding seem to operate in that people do not wear it to church or religious gathering, limiting its usage strictly for traditional occasions like festivals. Attending a Devotional Service on the programme “Mission Sunday Project” in Shangnyu village during field visit, the researcher observed the use of both western clothes and traditional clothes by the congregation as well as those who participated

⁴ Interviewed on 1st December 2019 , at Changki Village.1

⁵ Pastor Vikaho of Lumami Baptist Church.

⁶ Participant Observation 1st July 2018 , Devotional Service at Lumami Village.

⁷ Nagaland Christian Revival Church is a denomination that emerged in 1962 as a result of the revivalist movements in Nagaland.

in the programme. A notable sight of the service was the Choir who were all dressed uniformly in Konyak traditional attires. In fact, it is found that in other churches too when it comes to choirs the mekhela is the preferred choice as it ensures uniformity and easily available. Bengdangsenla (29 years old)⁸ who is a woman pastor in Molungkimong said that *“when there is song competition in the church sometimes, traditional attires are used, without ornaments, for uniformity.”*

Stylised versions of traditional clothes are found to be popular with young people in the form of modern ethnic wear where traditional male clothes such as shawls are tailored into jackets and mekkelas tailored into skirts or dresses and worn on festive occasions. When it comes to use of traditional attires however the choice of using it only on occasions appears to stem not only for religious matters but because of convenience as Asempla (84 years old)⁹ noted *“I use the plain market ones for everyday use, because it is lighter and cheaper.”* The use of traditional attires for some such as Lelievil (58 years old)¹⁰, who opined *“It is our identity when we go out how will other’s recognise us, it is not like when we use it we can’t pray”*, appears to be closely attached with identity. The choice of use of traditional attires and ornaments represents a segregation between the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’ and despite the affirmation of the use of traditional attires these are seen as identity markers of ethnicity and appears far removed from any sacredness.

The disapproval for wearing of trousers by women was found to be prevalent strongly in the rural areas; however this disapproval was found to be social disapproval rather than a religious one as the church officially or the priest particularly does not seem to emphasis on it. Many girls in rural areas prefer not to use pants to church because they were conscious of being

⁸ Interviewed on 17th June 2019, at Molungkimong Village.

⁹ Interviewed on 20th June 2019, at Molungyimsong village.

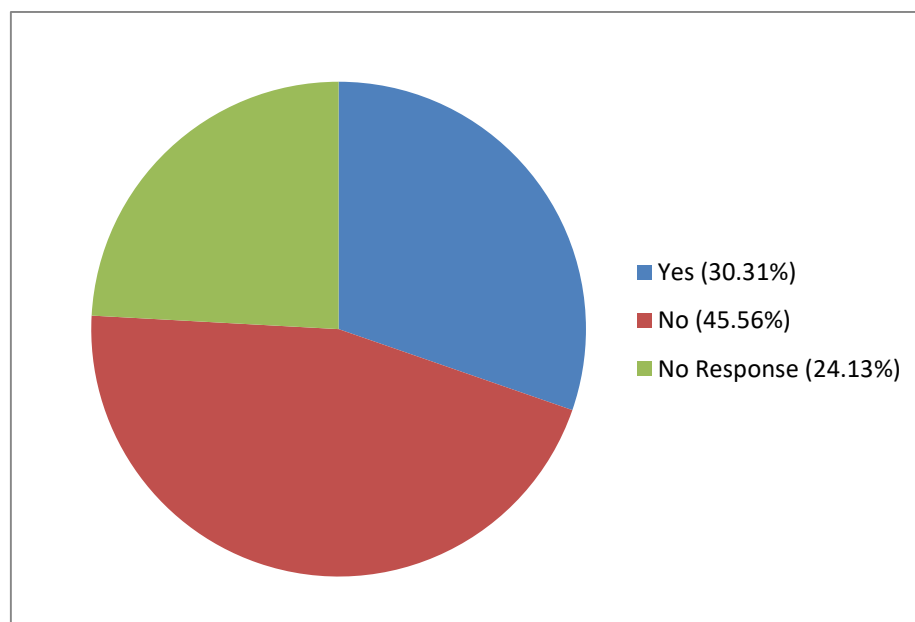
¹⁰ Interviewed on 11th October 2019, at Dihoma village.

considered 'wayward'. Thus, social approval appears to influence the kind of clothes one wears. The Bible does not specifically condone particular items of clothing, except against 'vulgarity in dressing' and use of 'heavy ornaments'. So far when it comes to clothing among Christians in Nagaland what can be concluded is that most Christian individuals have affirmed that their dressing mode is not influenced by religion.

d) Influence of Religion on Food and Drinks

In attempt to assess the influence of religion on food and drinks, a question was posed to the respondents whether they abstain from taking any food or drinks because of their religion, to which 30.31% agreed they do so while 45.56% responded in disagreement and 24.13% gave no response.

Fig. 5.4: Influence of Religion on Food and Drinks



Consumption of alcoholic beverages including rice beer, which are not approved by church on ground that it goes against the Christian values, was found to be common. It was found that abstinence from consuming certain food which was earlier prescribed taboo by

indigenous religious belief were still followed by many, such as the abstinence of unmarried Sumi girls from eating chicken feet, while taboo foods during pregnancies in olden days were still found to be practiced by a substantial number of women across all tribes. It may be noted that these tabooed food are related to the indigenous religious belief and not Christianity. Indigenization may have been appropriate to explain that food taboos of indigenous religion have now blended in with Christianity; if not for the fact that observance of these food taboos does not have any ritual value in the Christian context, and that these traditional food taboos are rather considered as contradicting Christian faith.

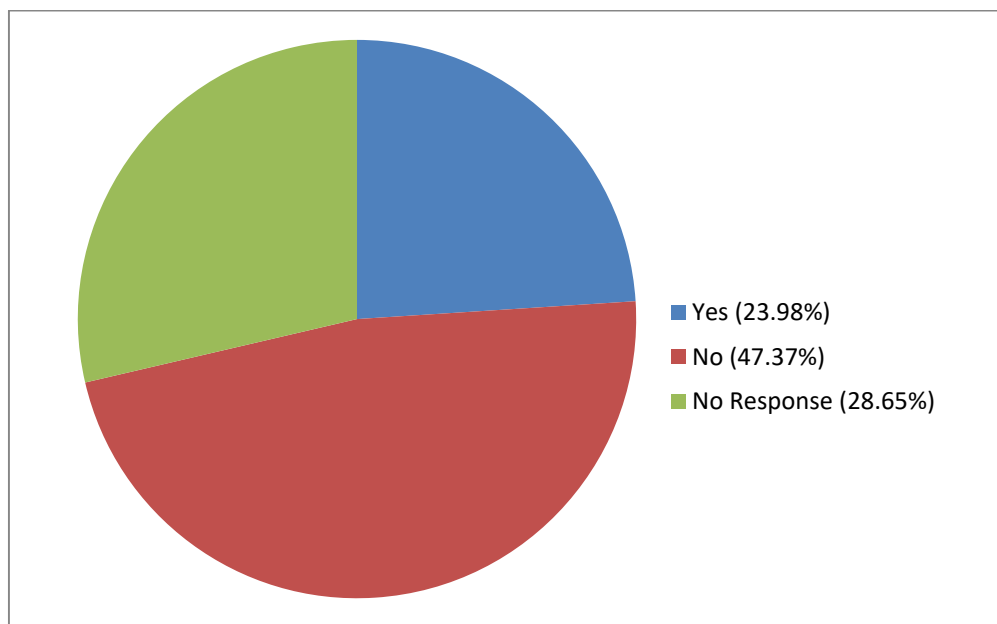
With regard to choice of food and drinks, the influence of religion appears to be limited to a marginal number of people thus indicating that, the influence of religious values is not as significant in contemporary society.

e) Observance of Sunday

Sunday is considered a holy day for Christians. According to the Bible God created the earth and the universe in six days and took rest on the seventh day. For the Christians Sunday is sacred, a day to be spend in worshipping God and not to be defiled by engaging in secular, worldly pursuits. As a predominantly Christian state, all economic activities are halted on Sundays, at least theoretically. The church frowns upon, in particular, on economic transactions being carried out on Sundays by believers. When the respondents were queried on whether they work on Sundays, the question was not of relevance to respondents who were employed in different institutions or offices, nor for farmers, who took rest on Sundays. However, a small section of respondents at 23.98% agreed that they do not desist from economic transactions on all days. Thus, the community as a collective observe Sunday as a holy day and rest from economic activities but in terms of individuals this is not found to be observed by all. Comparatively those who observed Sunday as a holy day and hence a day where they refrain

from economic activities formed 47.37% whereas 23.98% agreed to working on Sundays and 28.65% gave no response. Those who did not work reflected that Sunday is ‘the Lord’s day’ and it is a day which has to be dedicated to God, the individuals who worked on Sundays admitted that sometimes because of pressure to meet ‘deadlines’ or not to harm the business relationship they feel compelled to cater to their client’s needs.

Fig.5.5: Observance of Sunday



5.3. Religious Orientation and Socialization

Values are adopted through social learning; while family sets the foundation for forming values the school acts as an agent of socialization that mediates socially preferred values (Barakoska, 2014). An individual forms ideas of the worldviews, develops attitudes and values only in interaction with other human. Mcguire (2012, p.53) noted that “A person is not born with a set of religious beliefs and practices; religion is developed and nurtured (or ignored) in the socialization of the child.” A child incorporates the identity of his/her religion through socialization in his/her in-group. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966, p.150) “Primary

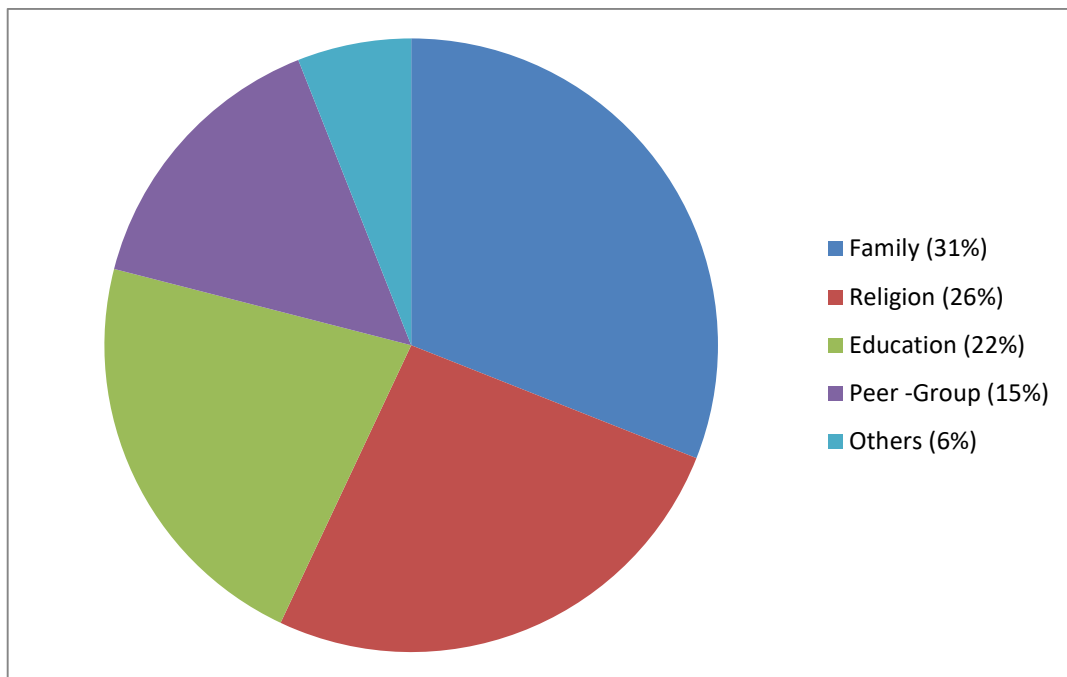
socialization is the first socialization an individual undergoes in childhood, through which he becomes a member of society.”

Family is a primary unit of socialization, in simple societies religious socialization and socialization into the larger group are not distinguished whereas in complex societies intellectual learning and religious learning from formal sources are more significant. Values are often closely associated with religion that the values one form or practice reflects one's religious behaviour which is in turn shaped by socialization. Religious socializations are therefore crucial to understand the religious behaviour of an individual.

a) Family and Religious Socialization

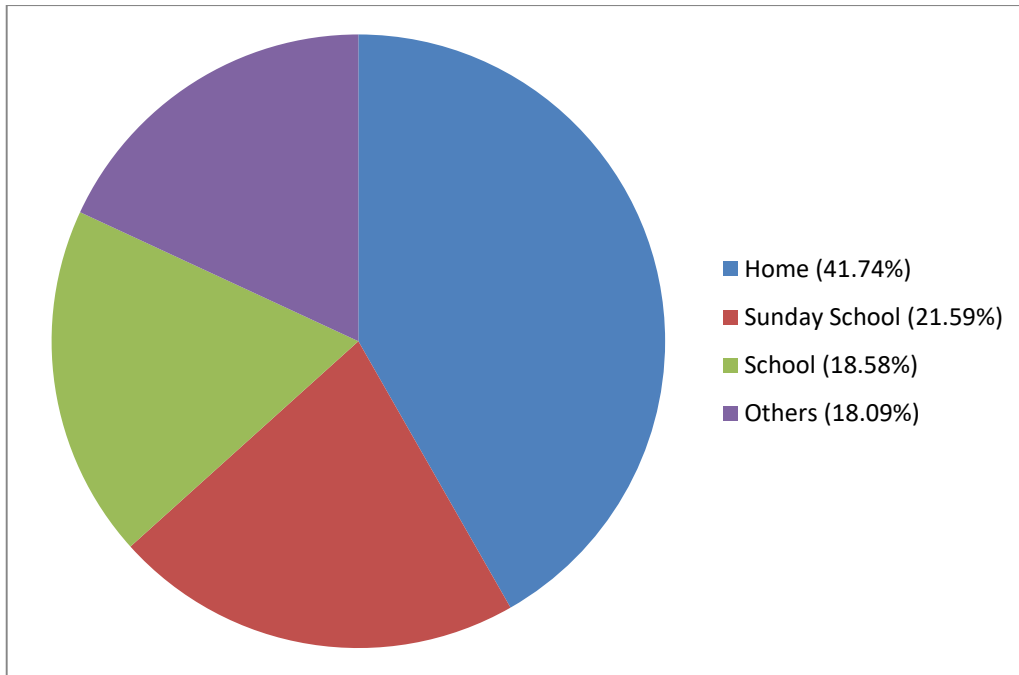
To analyze the role of family in religious orientation and socialization, it was necessary to first understand the respondents' attitude towards their families. Hence along with 'family' taking other significant influencers, such as 'religion', 'education', 'peer groups' and 'others'; they were asked to rate according to the importance these variables played in influencing their priorities or standards they keep in life. Family was rated as the most significant influence with 31 % followed by religion with 26%, then education with 22%, peer –group at 15 %and others with 6%.

Fig. 5.6: Significant Influences in Life



This reflects that the values a family uphold are the most likely to be imbibed by an individual. An assessment on family and religious socialization in this study revealed that, contemporary Naga families do not follow a uniform pattern of religious socialization. Undoubtedly, religious activities in one's household form an important part of religious socialization. It was found that while some families observed daily or weekly prayer meetings there were some who do not observe it at all. Besides, other household rituals such as fastings on New Years and Good Fridays were observed by certain household, while some opted go for picnics on these special days. Mcguire (2012, p.55) noted that in the later half of the twentieth century family involvement in official religious activities and religious education for children declined substantially. When posed with the question of where they first heard about God approximately 44 % of the respondents agreed it was at home, 30 % mentioned Sunday schools and 26 % said it was in Schools.

Fig. 5.7: Initiative to Knowledge of God



With respect to family and religious socialization, an attempt was made to understand who took the lead in religious activities at home. In this regard mothers were found to be the major initiator of religious activity at home. This is in contrary to the formal religious structure of church where conventionally, all activities were undertaken under the leadership of a pastor (invariably male), assisted by board of deacons (mostly male), and where women participation is confined to subordinate roles.

The inquiry into the socialization of religious values in Naga families found that there is no uniform pattern as such, with some families strictly observing religious rituals and practices and imparting the same to children, while in some families, there were no religious activities at all. In keeping with the patriarchal form of society while the father is typically found to be the head of the family, the same is not found in the religious domain, indicating a contradiction in terms of leadership at home and in the church. Keeping sight of the fact that in Naga society all aspect related to the public sphere such as politics, economy and social are

dominated by males, the relegation of religious leadership to women in the domestic arena is suggestive of a process of secularization, with religion increasingly confined to the private space.

b) Educational Institutions and Religious Socialization

The first schools in Nagaland were managed by the Christian missionaries. At present there are nearly 730 ¹¹ schools functioning in the state. A Naga child begins schooling between 3-4 years old; education is valued as the gateway to government jobs which means economic sustenance hence every Naga parents' first step for their children is to send them to school as soon as they reach the age. Even children from rural areas, due to dearth of higher secondary schools in the villages, often leave their natal homes, and stay either in hostels, at rented accommodations or with relatives in the towns to pursue higher education. While it is to be understood that secular educational institutions unlike theological institutions need not necessarily have a curriculum involving religious study or have activities revolving around religious training, socialization especially in young children and among youths are crucial for understanding the formulation and formation of values they began practicing. Education according to (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p.87) is a process, through which institutional meanings are powerfully and unforgettably impressed upon the consciousness of the individual. This allows an individual to learn norms and values which aids him to integrate with the society. Therefore, it was deemed pertinent to understand whether secular educational institutions in Nagaland imparted religious values to the pupils for integrating the individual to the greater Christian community. The intent of the researcher is not to identify the correlation between the different kinds of school (such as run by religious organisation like the Catholics) and the level of religious socialization because that is outside the purview of this study rather

¹¹ http://nbsenagaland.com/documents/List%20of%20schools_2010/schools2019.pdf

we study whether secular educational institutions provided forms of religious orientations in general.

In categorizing the responses three groups emerged- one which affirmed being oriented with religious knowledge at the school level, the second group which affirmed religious orientation and activities at higher educational level and the third group which dis-agreed that religious activities or knowledge were provided in educational institutions they attended. Most schools in the state hold morning assemblies, characterized by singing of hymns and prayer; this brings up the question why there are those who disagreed that there was any religious activities imparted in educational facilities or those who referred to it only at the higher level of education. On further probing, this was found to be because the respondents (who disagreed) did not regard those activities as a growth of their religious or spiritual life and hence could not remember or recognize those activities as religious. Thus, a process of de-sacralisation is noted where religious activities were performed but the feeling of sacredness appears to be absent for some, whereas there are some who regards the sacredness of the same performances. This informs that religious orientations are experienced differently among individuals because despite being exposed to the same rituals the experiences were different.¹² Among the students who affirmed religious orientation at higher levels of education, references to Evangelical Union (EU) were notable; most higher educational institutions in the state allows the setting up of evangelical unions to cater to the spiritual needs/life of the students. Evangelical Unions or EU as is popularly termed functions independently of the educational institutions where it is set up and the student members themselves run the union without any interference from the institution authorities. Therefore, it is to be noted that the religious activities in higher educational institutions are not directly impacted by the institutions themselves, but they

¹² The need to understand whether biological cognition or orientation from other social influences such as family etc impact different individual experience of rituals is recognized as an area for further research.

merely facilitate it where students may attend voluntarily. Perhaps this is the reason why despite the operation of EU in almost all the higher educational institutions in the state there were respondents who responded that they were never exposed to religious activities or orientations in educational institutions.

5.4. Contemporary Christian Nagas and Nominality

A report published by the *Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization* (1980) describes nominal Christian as a person who has not responded in repentance and faith to Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior and Lord, being a Christian in name only. The person may be very religious, claim to be a Christian, faithful in attending liturgical rites and worship services, and actively involved in church affairs. However, the report states 'despite all these unless one commits one's life to Jesus Christ one is still destined for eternal judgment.' It may be understood, here, that nominal Christians refer to those who claim to be Christians, who could be active members of church, who may observe Christian religious activities and rituals but still fail to realize the spiritual conviction of believing in Jesus Christ. However, Van De Poll (2018) argues that 'the nominal Christian' does not exist in real life instead there are many ways in which people can be at variance with the Christian identity they claim. He expressed that with respect to religious identity and practice it might be better to use the term 'nominality' instead of 'nominalism' since it also refers to a philosophical school of thought. He then defined 'nominality' as the discrepancy between a stated adherence to a faith and a committed application of that faith. For Christianity, he states, popularly four characteristics are applied to identify 'a nominal Christian' from a 'true Christian'- (1) not affiliated to church, (2) not going to church regularly, (3) not converted (born again) and (4) not committed to discipleship. He argues that these approaches are limited because it overlooks the possible discrepancies between Christian identity and commitment within the Church, that commitment to the Christian faith implies much more than attending church services, that such approach implies

that ‘nominal Christians’ are not really Christians at all and also risks an exclusive attitude towards other expressions of Christian faith, and finally that it is not justified to disqualify everyone who does not meet the standards of discipleship as ‘nominal’. Therefore, he asserts that, instead significant aspects such as initiation, faith, beliefs, church attachment, church participation, spiritual life and public practices (Christian conduct in daily life in society) be used as parameters for determining where/whether one is lacking in practicing Christianity. His approach stresses on identifying the quality/state of one’s religiosity rather than using deviations from norms, of certain section of people, to identify one’s adherence to a religion. Likewise, in Christian context he describes a state of ‘nominality’ as one where “Church members and unaffiliated people identifying themselves as ‘Christian’, who are in contradiction with basic principles of being Christian, with respect to becoming a Christian, faith, beliefs, church involvement and daily life.”

In this study when a query on negative impacts of Christianity was posed to the respondents, ‘the loss of culture’, ‘westernization’, prevalence of ‘different denominations’ and ‘nominal Christians’ were the most common responses given. Approximately 70% of the respondents stated ‘nominal Christians’ as one of the negative impact of Christianity in Nagaland. In terms of adherence and commitment to one’s faith (Van De Poll 2018), there was a general consensus that compared to Christianity Nagas were more committed to their faith when they practiced their indigenous religions.

During the course of study, it was found that the moral state of traditional society was held at more esteem than that of the contemporary Christian Naga society. Rev.Tzudir¹³ compared as thus *‘Even if they were not Christians our ancestors led virtuous lives, even though we are Christians, coercion, money power and corruption are operating in our*

¹³ Interviewed on 1st December 2019, Changki Village.

society.” Deviant practices such as ‘*Thefts, killing each other, hatred*’¹⁴ were said to be prevailing in the society despite Christian teachings against these practices. What could be discerned during this study was that whereas Nagas theologically disparaged their indigenous religion under the influence of ethnocentric views of western missionaries and colonial masters (as discussed in Chapter two), they have deep respect for the moral values and practices of their ancestors. This was best expressed by a retired Pastor¹⁵ from Lumami village, who reflected during an interactive session, that “*In the days of our forefathers they worshipped spirits but their generation was one of truthfulness.*”

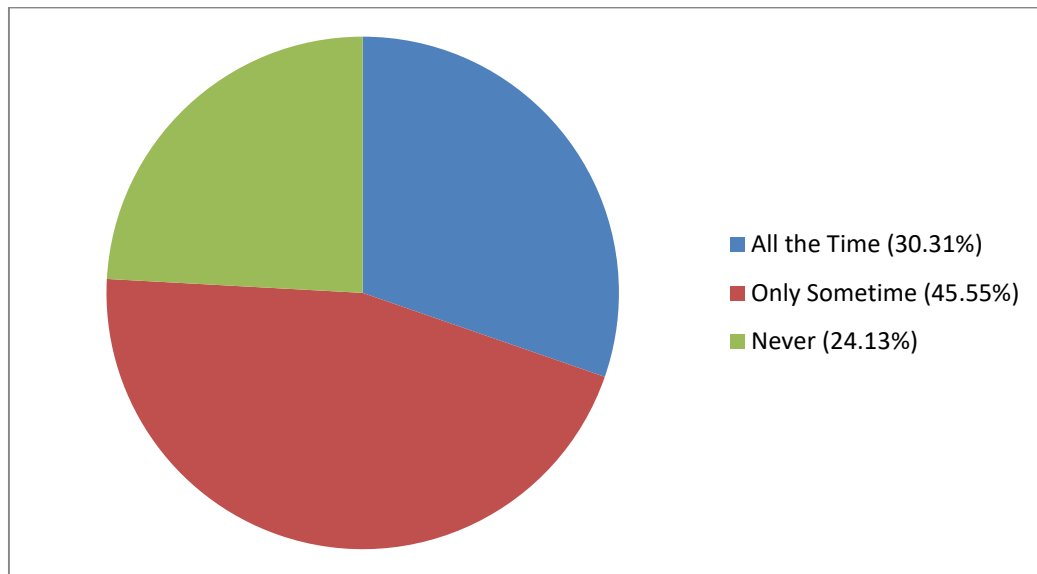
‘Nominal’ as Van De Poll (2018) stated, ‘expresses an idea of lacking in something.’ Among the Nagas, ‘nominal Christian’ is found to be a term used to imply that one is lacking as a Christian. However, besides this term it is also found that the terms such as ‘Christian by name only’ and ‘Sunday Christian,’ implying that one becomes a Christian only on Sundays by attending Sunday services, are commonly used as expressions for referring to a ‘Christian’ lacking in practice. In the context of the Nagas the identification of a ‘nominal Christian’ appears to be ascertained through Van De Poll’s (2018) perspective i.e., of assessing the application of Christian values in one’s life and not just by being a member of a church, being an active member of the church or by attending church services. The purview of this study did not extend to identify the state/quality of ‘nominality’ from all parameters (Poll 2018) however in trying to ascertain the influence of religion in the socio-cultural life of the Nagas, queries related to influence of religion in decision-making, observing Sundays, giving of tithes, influence of religion in choice of food and drinks and influence of religion in choice of clothing, as discussed formerly in this chapter, were covered. Besides, in an attempt to understand how the respondents assess their own religiosity a query on how frequently religion influenced their

¹⁴ Focus Group Discussion held in Ighanumi village on 24th November 2016

¹⁵ Zhetovi (84 years old) Interviewed on 19th July 2018, at Lumami Village.

behavior was posed. To this, 30.31% of the respondents agreed that their behavior was influenced by religion ‘all the time’, whereas, 45.55% of the respondents fell in the category ‘only sometime’ and 24.13% in the category of ‘never’.

Fig. 5.8: Behaviour Influenced by Religion



From the above data while it appears that the influence of religion in the behavior of the respondents is varied, it is evident that not all are found to adhere to religion.

Similarly, the earlier queries on aspects of choices, and observance of religious virtues such as giving tithes and abstaining from work on Sundays had also reflected similar responses i.e., variance leading to conclusions that religion does not influence the everyday life of all the contemporary Nagas. Taking all these into account, it can be said that there is indeed ‘nominality’ in contemporary Naga society, that not all Nagas adhere to religion and that there are Christian Nagas who contradict the basic principles of being Christian, with respect to being a Christian in their daily life’ (Van De Poll, 2018).

5.5. Conclusion

On examination of the religious values in the everyday way of life contemporary Nagas, the choice and behaviour of the individuals reflect that not all individuals are guided by religion in their everyday affairs (Weber) thus their *everydaynese* is not transformed by *the extra-everydanese* (Koev). While there are individuals who are found to be guided by religion the prevalence of those who don't, substantiate that the worldviews of a 'secular' and the 'religious' prevails in the society. The main agents of socialization in the society viz., the family and the educational institutions do not always provide religious knowledge or religious activities also reveals that the dichotomy of secular and religious are itself being oriented in the individuals. Bruce (2006, p.413) had noted that "When clergy complained of irreligion, they were complaining not that people were secular but that they were persisting in pre-Christian superstitious and were using the Church's rituals in a magical manner." Of the contemporary Nagas, we note that they are not secular they are just not as religious. This is because no Christian Naga is completely devoid of religious faith as a Christian however not all are abiding by all the Christian principles in their everyday life. Thus, the identity of 'nominal Christians' i.e., meaning a Christian lacking in faith appears to be well identified in the society and recognized as a drawback of converting to Christianity.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The intricate relationship between religion, society and culture in social-anthropological studies greatly influenced by Durkheim (1915) and Radcliffe-Brown (1964) generally reflects and revolves around the idea that religious beliefs and practices are expressions of society's values and are closely tied to the social structures. Religion is considered as a product of society and at the same time having the power to bind/bend the society to it. The moral values of a society, in this regard, find no distinct separation between the religious values and social values. Structural-functionalist approach which views this correlation between religion and society focusing intently on the function of religion in society is, as Saliba (1977:185) noted, one of the most common approaches applied by social-anthropologists in the study of religion. This thesis too followed the traditions of the structural-functionalist seeking to understand the integration between religion and society. Moreover, a very simple but very effective and relevant method adopted in understanding religion and society was found echoed in Nath's (2011: 2) introductory note of his edited volume *Religion and Society in North East India* wherein he stated that 'the volume was not a study of religion as such rather it was a study of society as a reflex of the religious systems.' The study of society as a reflex of its religious system in the context of Nagaland proved most appropriate as the people of Nagaland has experience of two religious systems viz., Naga Indigenous Religions and Christianity . While the bedrock of this thesis is based on the socio-cultural impact of Christianity i.e., study of Naga society as a reflex of Christianity, it became crucial to also examine the pre-Christian socio-cultural history of Naga society. Given the general acceptance that where Christianity was introduced native cultures tended to erode, traditional Naga society

was also visited to best comprehend the influence of Christianity in the socio-cultural life of the Nagas.

Upon examination of the belief system of traditional Naga society it was found that the nomenclature of Naga religion as 'animism' is not apt. The presence of Supreme Being in the Sumi, Konyak and Angami pantheon besides the Ao gods with definite functions defies the Tylorian definition of animism 'a belief in a supernatural' as inadequate to define the Naga religions. Moreover animism is found to be an ethnocentric view pursued by westerners to refer to religion of indigenous communities. The westerners adapted the term to imply that the indigenous people have no 'real religion' and to suggest the 'primitiveness' of the native (non-westerners) people's religion. With regard to religion of the Nagas a re-examination of its nomenclature as 'traditional religion' (Nshoga, 2009; Abraham Lotha, 2016; Chophy, 2019), 'tribal religion' (Longchar, 1995), 'primal religion' (Imchen, 1993; Longkumer and Moanungsang, 2012) etc., were not found to be totally relevant. On the other hand, in general, in religious studies development of new academic programmes and publications related to Indigenous Religions, supports 'Indigenous' as the preferred designation (Cox 2007:30). Cox (2007) provides three features for identifying indigenous religions "(1) indigenous societies are local, or at least self contained, and thus have no interest in extending their religious beliefs and practices beyond their own limited environment; (2) they are based primarily on kinship relations and usually have a strong emphasis on ancestors; (3) they transmit their traditions orally, resulting in a fundamentally different attitude towards beliefs and practices than is found amongst traditions derived from and based on authoritative written sources". The Naga Religions were local with each tribe and village having their own localised belief system and practice and were not prone to extending their beliefs outside their locality. Secondly the eldest male in the clan or family was often the religious head taking charge of performing many clan or family rituals; ancestors were revered and clans/tribes shared common mythical descent.

Lastly, beliefs and practices of the Nagas were transmitted orally and experienced by individuals in the context of communal life and nature (Thong 2009: 251). In this context the religion of the Nagas qualifies as an indigenous religion characteristically. Hence, the religions of Nagas were thus proposed to be categorized as Naga Indigenous Religions whereas specific tribal appellation may be attached while dealing with specific tribes such as Angami Indigenous Religion, Ao Indigenous Religion, Sumi Indigenous Religion, Konyak Indigenous Religion as such.

In traditional Naga society it emerges that the belief system of the different tribes had some common characters such as belief in ancestral spirits, belief in sky spirits, belief of afterlife etc., and common practices of taboo, sacrifices, rituals and so on. However, a distinct variation among the tribes in their beliefs appears to be the belief in a Supreme Being; while the Sumi and Konyak believed the Supreme being to be a patriarch, the Angami sees it more as a genderless spirit whereas the Aos believed in the supremacy of a number of gods who governs different aspects of the universe and do not centralize the authority of supremacy in a single deity. In this respect, one finds the traditional polity of the different tribes correlates with varying belief in the concept of the Supreme Being. To illustrate, the Sumis and Konyaks believed that a Supreme male deity ruled the universe, and this belief appears to have a correlation with their chieftainship form of polity wherein a chief (always male) had absolute authority over the village. The Angami and Ao tribes, on the other hand, followed a seemingly democratic polity of clan representatives who presided over village administrations. Thus, the Ao believed in a number of gods and did not have the concept of a supreme deity. Whereas, the Angami supreme deity was conceived of as a genderless spirit, despite the strong emphasis of it as a birth mother, and thus deprived the ordinary women to identify themselves with the supreme deity in the same gender category. Hence, a clear correlation is to be found between religion and society in traditional Naga society where Durkheim's (1917, pp.206) theory that

‘the symbol of the god and of the society are one, because the god and society are only one,’ implying that gods are representations of societies is found to be relevant. In the Naga context the socio-political environment is found to reflect the difference in the belief of the Supreme Being.

The family, clan and kinship structure, the basic social organization of traditional society, reveals the patriarchal dominance in the social structure. The integration of the social structure with religion was further identified - every family was found to be the smallest religious unit where family and household rituals such life cycle rituals were performed. In addition, different rituals were performed in the family for different circumstances such as sickness, house construction, etc., where the father/husband traditionally took the lead. Similarly in a clan or kinship structure the oldest and ablest male member functioned as the priest for their in-groups. Some tribes such as the Ao and the Sumi have designated priestly clan, namely the Pongener and the Aye clan respectively, and only members from these clans could function as village priests.

Gender relations in traditional Naga society were to a large extent determined by their religious beliefs. Distinct roles and statuses were prescribed for men and women based on the concept of masculinity and femininity. Khala’s (2012) observation that ‘religious appropriation of roles and status is so strong that they are taken as dharma and to be observed in expectation of receiving blessings or protection from evils’ is found to be relevant in the Naga context as going against the prescribed norms of masculinity and femininity not only brought social disgrace but was considered ‘profane’. The concept of taboo operated to define what/how a man or a woman was to be or behave. For instance, engaging in wars or hunting were deemed to be masculine traits as it required great physical skill and also required moving further from home grounds and were thus taboo for women. Whereas, weaving was considered feminine as it required working close to home and also without exerting much physical labor and was thus

taboo for men. Women were found to be amiss in the role of leadership in family, clan or village structure. Besides, the status of priesthood was also never accessible to women.

The everyday life of traditional Naga society was found inter-wined with religion. Whether it was the manner of dressing, food habits or experiencing life cycles (marriage, birth and death) they derived their meaning through their religion. Dress and ornaments were appropriated through their beliefs; thus certain clothing and ornamental articles were tabooed or allowed to be worn according to one's status, role, gender, age etc. Life cycle rituals were usually a series of performance; thus among the Sumi a marriage ritual extended to even three years. Life cycle rituals were seriously observed often involving the role of family and clan and offerings and sacrifices. The acute belief of the Nagas in these auspicious times can be noted from the fact that these rituals were observed even in the case of their domesticated animals. For instance, when domesticated animal like a pig have piglets, it was taboo to have house-visitor.

The operation of the youth dormitory i.e., the morung system which gave more significance to the boy's dormitory as a political and sacred space deepened the wide gap between the men-women structure. However, the noticeable factor is how the boys dormitory was regarded a political and yet a sacred space thus bespeaking of the influence of religion. The observance of festivals closely attuned to their agricultural life and dedicated to their deities; where family, clan, village interactions were promoted besides the performance of many rituals either as revelry or in sports, where the participants dress in special clothing and ornaments all these reflect how they were able to blend their economic, aesthetic, social and religious life very effectively.

Traditional Naga society thus reflected a social organisation/ structure and cultural life inter-wined closely with religion. The everyday life of the traditional Naga society was influenced deeply by their belief systems. Weber's (1930) theory that 'religious belief and

practices gave direction to individual's everyday way of life and prompted him to adhere to it' is found to be relevant, thus, it may be said that religion of the traditional Naga society was highly pervasive in all aspects of life. Religion in traditional Naga society was closely intertwined with their socio-cultural life. It is what Geertz (1973) had defined as a cultural system, in traditional Naga context religion and culture cannot be separated, their religion was their way of life; the everyday life of the Nagas could not be segregated from the religious life because the moods and motivations of their everyday life were influenced by their religion itself. Thus the hypothesis that traditional socio-cultural life of the Nagas was deeply embedded in religious beliefs and practices is found to be true.

To lead to an analysis of the socio-cultural impact of Christianity, the process and dynamics involved in conversion to Christianity was undertaken. The first real step towards successive conversion in the Naga Hills was traced back to the initiative of Godhula, an Assamese man who visited Molungkimong in 1872, guided by Supongmeren an Ao man from Molungkimong who had converted to Christianity under the influence of Godhula in Sibsagar. Examining the earliest 'accounts of the converts' (Snow & Machalek, 1984) as also the accounts of those who converted late and other relevant conversion cases the process and dynamics involved in conversion among the tribes, villages or individuals was found to vary from case to case.

For instance Hubi (the first Naga convert), Longchanglepzuk (second convert) and Supongmeren (through whom Christianity came to Nagaland), were all converted while working in Assam. In the analysis of some account such as the case of Subongmeren who converted through Godhula the relationship and interaction between the convert and the agent of conversion were strong and therefore hints that sustained interaction (Snow & Machalek, 1984: 185) and familiarity could have eased the process of conversion. Kinship was also found to have been the common factor between the convert and the agent of convert as could be seen

in the case of Thaishe Achumi the first convert from Lumami village whose conversion was made possible on account of his kinsman Zhekikhe Achumi from a neighbouring village of Sumi Settsu. Similar was the case in the second wave of early conversion in Tamlu village, where account of the conversion of a Konyak couple is notable because five other households, all kin to the couple, decided to follow suit. Incidentally, the said couple, from Tamlu converted following the demise of their son, a life crises situation of loss which initiated a *turning point* (Stark & Lofland, 1965) culminating in conversion. Kinship and gender was found to be significant factors in the account of late converts as well. For instance, the last converts from Tamlu village were two brothers, who embraced Christianity when they were both in their nineties. One of the last converts of Khonoma village was a woman in her sixties who could not convert earlier as her husband was resistant to the idea of abandoning their indigenous religion. The case of this female convert has to be taken in light of the patriarchal gender relation in Naga society where all major decisions rest with menfolk. Education was a socio-cultural factor which facilitated conversion (Ifeka-Moller 1974) as could be observed through the case of Saho (first convert from Jakahama village) and Nisier Meru (first convert from Khonoma village). However, it was found that it was not just education *per se* but employment in the schools and mission centres, that also facilitated conversion such as in the case of Tzüdiong (first convert from Changki village) and Odangba who worked as a cook for the missionaries in Impur Mission centre and his brother Impokumba (through whom Christianity was spread in Changki Village). One needs to know that not every school student embraced Christianity as was found in the case of Angami Nagas. The common factor observed where conversion took place in relation to school was that the new converts were influenced by the native teachers who were already Christians. Early converts also faced hostility in many instances and suffered harassments. In Sumi villages where chiefs accepted the new religion early on, conversion took place at a faster rate. On the contrary Konyak chiefs, though similar

in polity, resisted conversion initially, and this fact stalled their own villages from conversion till much later as compared to other tribes. In tracing the trajectory of the process of early conversions in Naga society, the invisibility of western missionaries in the process of conversion is quite notable. Except for conversions which took place in Kohima and Impur where mission centres and schools were located, native evangelists were found to be the most significant agency of conversion in Naga society. Though conversions were effected through the agency of the school in some tribes such as the Ao and the Konyak, it was not found to be the case in all the tribes. For instance, the present study found that in angami villages, not all school goers could be converted in the early days. To argue that well established mission centres and schools facilitated conversion may be true for the Aos but for the Angamis who had the same they did not show such result. Therefore, social- structural perspectives of Ifeka-Moller (1974) which identified education as a factor of religious conversion was found to be so in case of the Aos but not as effective among the Angamis.

In trying to understand the dynamics of conversion of the Konyak and the Sumi people which displayed similar political system of chieftainship, it is noteworthy that in both the tribes, mass conversion to Christianity was a distinctive feature in many villages. The point of departure between the two tribes, however, stands in the fact that the mass conversion process of the Konyak people took place relatively later, i.e, more than a decade after the Sumi people. The factor of contact and exposure do not appear to be the reason as both share borders with the Ao Nagas, the pioneers of Christianity. In fact Tamlu, a Konyak village had its first individual convert as early as 1932. Both the Konyak and Sumis had areas which were left unadministered which rules out any explanation based on that, the Sumi in its later stage had a mission centre at Aizuto and a mission school which may have accelerated the process of conversion. Historically, the early converts of Christianity among the Sumi were chiefs, which played an important role and probably this is where the difference lay, for unlike the Sumi

Chiefs, the *Anghs* of the Konyaks were considered 'divine' and this may have made it harder for them to relinquish their beliefs for another, being the sacred symbol of their indigenous religion. Individual integration to the society, as well as, village integration to the larger society was found to be crucial determinants for the late converts. The internal dynamics of the society itself has therefore played significant roles in the historical trajectory of conversion in Naga society.

To reiterate, the current study encompassed four tribes to grasp more comprehensively the impact of Christianity in the society. Historically it is recognized that Naga society like other tribes of North eastern states of India and indigenous communities of the world underwent major cultural change with the introduction of Christianity. The earlier works on impact of Christianity in indigenous societies were dominated by religious and missionary perspectives which viewed Christianity as the harbinger of monotheism, education, modern lifestyle, humane values etc giving the impression that it ushered in only positive changes. In the recent decades the missionary perspective of conversion and study of Christianity has received counter narratives as native scholars has become concerned with exploring other perspectives other than the former notions of seeing Christianity just as the harbinger of 'everything good' in the communities it encountered. Likewise this study has focused on the complex socio-cultural processes that Naga society is undergoing as it tries to negotiate the changes experienced with the adoption of a new religion.

With the advent of Christianity, undoubtedly the most impacted aspect of Naga society was their belief system and consequently their worldview. From a worldview which encompassed only their immediate environment the Naga Christians embraced a worldview where a Supreme God who created the entire universe and everything in it became prevalent. This new worldview has in-turn brought the Nagas under the canopy of one belief system which has united them into one single community- Christians. The identity of belonging to the same

group has thus helped abandon the practice of wars and killing, dispelling fear of ‘the other’ and initiated more peaceful relations and interactions between villages and tribes as well. The indigenous belief system was in typical western –missionary- style condemned and with conversion to Christianity it was required and expected to be completely abandoned. However, this study finds that some indigenous beliefs still permeate the Christian worldview. For instance, the indigenous beliefs in ancestral spirits were found to be prevalent amongst more than one-fourth of the respondents. In addition, the indigenous belief in omens by reading certain events and incidents were also found to be prevalent. Considering the pervasiveness of Christian faith in contemporary Naga society which claim theological superiority over the indigenous religions, such findings were quite contrary to the general notion that Nagas had discarded all their ‘animistic’ beliefs and practices with the advent of Christianity. Therefore, keeping aside the theological beliefs, the lived experience of the Christian Naga exhibits a ‘syncretism’ (Dennis 1997) of indigenous and Christian worldviews. Moreover, retroversion (Sahay 1966) where aspects of indigenous beliefs are re-valued (Sahay 1966) was discerned as there is a renegotiation to connect the indigenous beliefs to Christianity. For instance for some, the perspective now is that ‘though the worship was misplaced (i.e., worshipping the spirits) the rituals performed were akin to the ones practiced in the Old Testament.’

Members of society go through phases in their individual lives which endow on them certain new status and role. Marking such new phase individuals often perform rituals, these rituals serve as forms of social recognition. The rituals observed in individual stages of life are called the life cycle rituals or the rites of passage (Gennep, 1960:2-3). Life cycle rituals are greatly determined by one’s belief system, and hence one of the focuses of the present study was to examine how Christianity impacted the life cycle rituals which once operated under the direction of indigenous beliefs.

The distinction between males and females were largely done away with after the advent of Christianity. Food taboos related to pregnancy and childbirth has now become optional and not strictly observed, though some women were still found to practice it. The mode of familial socialization accounts for the prevalence of food taboo amongst some women whereby past accounts of violation of such probably induced aversion towards certain food. A most significant change after Christianity has been the integration of the child into the society through the church. The child's name is now registered in the church once the christening takes place. The role of the church in christening and registering of a child however differs in method among the tribes. Among the Sumi and the Konyak christening takes place with involvement of the church and after christening the child's name is submitted to church for registration. For the Angami a child is named by the family and its name submitted to the church for registration whereas among the Aos the women department visit the family and issue a registration certificate for the newborn child. The period of day(s) required for christening a child was also found to prevail influenced by traditional norms. Angamis have continued to name a child soon as it is born, whereas the Konyaks and Aos name a child between 3-4 days of its birth and the Sumi take at-least a week before christening a child as practiced earlier.

A change in marriage rituals observed among the Nagas now is the element of individualism, which appears more distinct when factors such as education, economic independence and exposure/interaction with other culture are associated with the individuals who are marrying. It is also in marriage rituals where the acculturation (Dennis 1997) of westernization appears most prominent such as exchange of rings, cake cutting, use of a tuxedo and white wedding gown etc. A major change in marriage rituals after coming of Christianity is the role of the church now – while the priest solemnizing the marriage ceremony can be considered a continuity of the indigenous custom where the priest played significant role in performing marriage rituals, marrying in the church is also a western Christian tradition.

Notwithstanding the changes ushered in with Christianity, elements of cultural continuities can be found in patriarchal dominance, maintenance of a social structure where family and clan identity remained paramount, besides tribal distinction are visible in life cycle rituals. There has been a notable change in the nature of marriage feasts, starting from the food items served, wherein rice-beer, a traditional drink used in most traditional feasts, is no longer used. While modern commodities have become closely tied with marriage rituals now either in terms of food consumption or as gifts, marriage gift items such as indigenous shawls and others which have latent identity of tribe and social structures have been continued.

Contemporary death rituals among the Nagas exhibit both change as well as continuity. All Naga tribes now collectively follow a Christian funeral rite and burial system. However, tribal identities as well as other social indicators are visible such as covering the dead body with traditional shawls (according to tribe and gender), the public announcement of death through different patterns of bell-ringing according to gender and age etc.,. As stated earlier, while the burial of the dead among all the tribes in the study follow Christian rituals, yet the prevalence of some indigenous characteristics such as talking to the dead, or the usage of tribal markers affirm that a process of indigenization (Sahay 1966) has taken place. In the narrative of the cultural impact of Christianity in Naga society, the prevalence of dogmatic tension can be found between those who are keen to practise an undiluted or pure form of Christian model in the rituals and practices (represented by the religious practitioners like pastors or priests), and those who are bent on preserving traditional culture.

Most traditional attires and ornaments were discarded in the initial years of conversion under the influence of the Christian missionaries who convinced the natives that these were related to their 'animistic' belief system. Traditional attires were replaced by western wear. However of late, there has been a resurgence of reviving the ethnic attires and ornaments because of its association with tribal identity but the contemporary usage of such is purely

secular and not based on religious beliefs. Dress and ornaments which were once tabooed for others and meant only for certain clan/status/merit are now worn freely of one's choice. Ethnic attires and ornaments are found to be used during festivals, during cultural programmes such as in educational institutions or often in secular public events, representative of one's tribal identity

Traditional Naga society was permeated with taboos and rituals, the infraction of which was believed to be collective, i.e., not only the individual concerned, but the clan, and entire community, including livestock was believed to be affected by violation of a taboo. Much of the taboos associated with food, pregnancy, birth, death, etc., are no longer observed after the advent of Christianity. In the Christian worldview the foods which were tabooed in indigenous Naga beliefs holds no value now, on the other hand consuming the traditional drink of the Nagas called *Aji* (sumi), which had high ceremonial value apart from its everyday use, is considered a vice now on grounds of its intoxicating effect. Hence, a complete turnabout of what was earlier considered 'sacred' and 'profane' and what is considered 'sacred' and 'profane' has taken place.

In traditional Naga society, festivals were important markers of the annual agricultural cycle and observed with a spirit of sanctity and ritual purity with a view to incur the blessings and goodwill of the deities, often accompanied by live sacrifices. The advent of Christianity has impacted deeply on the observances of indigenous festival, detaching them from its ritual importance. Apart from Changki village of the Aos which completely ceased observing any traditional festivals, other tribes and villages were found to observe traditional festivals though not regularly. In a departure from the pre-Christian days, the observance of traditional festivals today is devoid of religious implications and apart from the invocation of blessings by a pastor/priests, it remains a purely secular cultural affair, which do not garner universal participation from all. On the other hand, contemporary Naga society sees enthusiastic

observance and participation in all significant Christian events such as Christmas, Easter Sunday, etc., which are eagerly awaited, imbued with religious fervour.

The education system which was introduced by the British government and managed by western Christian missionaries replaced the traditional institution and norm of socializing and training the youths. Schools which taught English, arithmetic and bible lessons replaced the *morungs* where oral narratives about their beliefs, history and lived experiences etc were shared. Formal educational institutions were social spaces that brought the different tribes together unlike the pre- Christian times when clans, *khels*, villages, tribes etc were confined to their own *morungs*. Possibly it was these interactions which must have aided the Nagas in developing a one nation identity, as opined by Achumi (2012: 92) who noted it was the educated Nagas who spearheaded the formation of Naga Club, Tribal Council and the Naga National Council. While on one hand Christianity and associated institutions have broadened the worldview of the Nagas along with the ideas of other world; self –determinism, hygienic lifestyles, and modern economic and political systems have been introduced, on the flipside, the new religious system has to a large extent alienated the natives from a rich cultural heritage. The western mode of education did not include oral narratives nor covered any substantial and informative detail on Naga socio-cultural history. The attitude of respect for formal education, which is western, has in-turn developed into respect for western lifestyle such that western lifestyle and western culture has become the mark of what is ‘standard’ in the Naga society. Education and its employment opportunities have also initiated changes in the socio-economic structure of the society leading to a new class of people which were not prevalent in the traditional economic or social structure. Besides, education has given rise to new social groups in the Naga community such as the students union, the modern elite class, as well as creating school drop-outs and educated unemployed. Thus, new forms of social differentiation have resulted where education/degree of education has become a major determinant of identity. The

informal institution of learning in the traditional society, i.e., the *morung*, was a sacred space replete with ritual sanctity and tabooed for women, whereas the formal educational systems were largely secular spaces without any ritual restrictions. In terms of religious socialization in the formal schools, the impact is found to be negligible.

Family has continued unperturbed as a nuclear, preferably patrilocal and undisputedly a patriarchal social institution. With the non-functioning of the *morungs* as an institution of learning and socialization young boys and girls no longer leave their parents home to sleep in the dormitories. Some household rituals have continued in a modified form such as house dedication on completion of constructing a new house, and thanksgiving feast such as on achieving certain success by a family member with the church taking a prominent role in these rites now. Prayer meetings and even fasting are observed by family members now on auspicious occasions. Hence, the house continues to be a religious space; however unlike the public sacred space that is the church, where males dominates the ritual scene, it is found that at home it is the woman i.e., the mother/wife who often initiates religious activities. The private sacred space does not reflect a similar hierarchy of the public sacred space. At home it is the woman, who plays the subordinate roles in church, who is the initiator of rituals thus suggesting that household rituals are now not significant enough to merit the dominant role of a patriarch.

Other new significant forms of identities have emerged in the society with the coming of Christianity. Social groups based on religious denominational have distinct identities in present Naga society, whereby people have a sense of belonging together and looks to other denominations as 'the other(s)'. Members of the society are now identified as Christian or non-Christians, baptized church member or un-baptized church member, prevailing church-member or excommunicated-church member. The formers are all regarded to be of prestigious status and identity both ritually and socially; as they are considered to be the ideal upholders of

morality in the society. The church in this instance has emerged not only as the new religious institution but as a powerful social institution in the community.

In the church structure patriarchal expressions dominates the hierarchy as women heading the church are still very rare to be found; this is crucial considering the church represents the modern aspect of the society with its allegiance to Christianity, it is also not just the religious but a prominent social institution in the society. The reluctance of the church to induct women into leadership roles, however qualified and capable they may be, is an indicator that the religious institution hierarchy is not free from the influence of the wider social structure. This in turn reflects the sustained cognitive pre-Christian attitude of the people towards women as a subordinate still. The traditional social structure related to gender relations in Naga society has thus permeated the most prominent Christian institution i.e., the church.

It is observed that many changes have been experienced in material culture very prominent of which are in the variety of non-traditional clothes that are used now, the new material and aesthetic designs of constructing modern influenced houses, certain food and drinks which were earlier taboo are accepted now whereas rice beer which was earlier a part of everyday diet and was used significantly in rituals is forbidden now. Aspects of continuities can be linked to intangible cultural values such as beliefs in omens and ancestral spirits, norms of distinguishing gender and age, values of identity and solidarity of family, clan, village and tribe. Despite the introduction of new significant socio-religious institutions such as the church, and universal cultural institutions such as formal educational institutions which have led to emergence of new social group/class in the society the traditional social structure has been least affected. Patriarchy continues to dominate the socio-religious sphere and women are still relegated only subordinate roles, age continues to be a huge determinant in exerting social influence and privilege and the society is still distinctly stratified on the basis of clan, gender, age, villages and tribes.

The study of religious values in the everyday way of life contemporary Nagas reveals religion does not permeate the everyday life of the people, in terms of decision making and behaviour regulation, individuals are not essentially bound by religious principles. While about one-third of respondents affirmed their reliance on religious principles to guide them in decision making, a larger proportion of respondents rely intermittently, or not at all, on their religion while making life-decisions. This clearly can be taken to be a separation of the everyday, mundane life from the religious and sacred dimensions of Christianity such as going to church and other related activities. It is thus found to be in contrast to the traditional Naga society where everyday life was imbued with religious significance and permeated with rituals, with no distinctive line drawn between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane’ in the Durkheimian perspective. With regard to Christian practices and custom like tithing a majority of the respondents at 65.59% affirmed that they adhere to the obligatory practice of offering a tenth of their earnings to church regularly, while the rest, though they feel obliged, could not do so regularly on account of financial constraint. The study finds that ‘nominal Christian’ is identified as one who is failing to live a true Christian life, and approximately 70% of the respondents stated that many Christian Nagas today are only ‘nominal Christians’ implying that they are failing to adhere to Christian principles. Van De Poll (2018) had stated that instead of simply identifying one as ‘nominal’ the measure of the quality/state of the various parameters of a religious life, which he defined as ‘nominality’, be used to ascertain adherence to one’s religion. In Christian context he defines nominality as one where “Church members and unaffiliated people identifying themselves as ‘Christian’, who are in contradiction with basic principles of being Christian, with respect to becoming a Christian, faith, beliefs, church involvement and daily life.” Accordingly, based on the data related to influence of religion from decision-making to clothing, food and drinks, on behaviour and religious practices of observing Sunday and tithing, where a large number of respondents were found not adhering

to Christian principles, it can be said that the state of ‘nominality’ among Contemporary Christian Nagas is not insignificant.

In pre –Christian era, the religious observance of rituals, taboos and ritual days were strictly adhered to. However, the same was not found to hold true amongst a substantial number of respondents who were all Christians. This can be gauged from the fact that almost one-fourth of the respondents do not observe the sacredness of Sunday by engaging in economic transactions which goes against the Christian principle of keeping Sunday as a holy day of rest. In traditional Naga society observance of a ritual day was strictly adhered to, sacrifices and offerings were duly given by all concerned, besides every aspect of their life including major life events such as marriage to everyday affairs such as consuming food and drinks, or wearing of dress and ornaments etc were guided by their religious values.

Today the Nagas are facing contradictory views towards their indigenous culture with a section of the community opining that their authentic identity cannot be realized without preserving their ethnic culture, while there are some (especially religious practitioners) who believe that the ideal of being a true Christian cannot be achieved by continuing to practice indigenous culture. There is an underlying conflict between what is considered a ‘true Christian culture’ and the people’s strong need to persevere their ethnic identities and solidarities. In this regard, Christianity in Nagaland also faces two directions – a way of western influenced Christianity and an indigenized form of Christianity, a similar complexity which Tiěnou (1991) observed about Christianity in Africa where people were experiencing a ‘crisis of identity’ pulled between ‘westernisation’ and ‘indigenous authenticity’.

In the Christianization process the Nagas have acculturated a theology that negates the ritual significance of indigenous culture. This fact can be correlated to the complexities found in Naga society where on one hand, there is a felt urgent need to preserve their cultural identity and historicity, while at the same time, the cultural practices and ritual has been relegated to

the secular sphere. The tension in the need to preserve traditional culture on one hand, and the Christian requirement of practicing a 'pure' Christian theology often created a situation of 'crises' for many practising Christians. The process of secularization has thus taken place in the society where indigenous 'traditional culture' and western Christian culture co-exists but with the former falling under the category of secular and the later regarded as endowed with sacredness. Shiner (cited in Porter, 1973:67) redeveloping the earlier definitions of secularization proposed drawing the lines on three basic meanings: *transposition* (aspects of religious belief or experience shifted from a sacral to a purely human context); *desacralization* (loss of the sense of the sacred); and *differentiation* (religious norms and institutions become distinct from secular ones. In the Naga context the indigenous culture shifting from a sacral to a purely human context is observed along-with the loss of the sense of its sacredness, besides the religious norms and institutions have become distinct from secular ones; hence, elements of *transposition*, *desacralization* and *differentiation* are all visible in the context of Naga society as a consequence of Christianity.

In traditional Naga society religion pervaded all aspects of their socio-cultural life. From the social structure of their society where the roles and statuses were defined by their religious beliefs, or in the way they socialized the new members of the community or the manner in which they attired and adorn themselves, or in how they go through their life cycles – the role of religion we find is not just significant, it was in fact the determining factor of all the aspects; providing meaning to their lives. It was the ideas of their religion which formed the norms, patterns and values of their socio-cultural life. Religion in traditional Naga society was thus closely intertwined with their socio-cultural life. After the advent of Christianity, secularization is evident in the society in two forms – firstly the dichotomy of the *sacred* and *profane* i.e. the domain of what is religious and secular has become distinct unlike earlier where no such distinction was possible as their belief system permeated their entirety. There are now

social, cultural and religious values as such, or social, cultural and religious practices/activities etc which can be identified separately. Secondly, religion is no longer the only source which provides ‘meaning’ to people’s everyday life; unlike in traditional times where even everyday affairs such as consuming food and drinks or wearing a piece of cloth or adorning an ornament were guided by their religious beliefs. Contemporary Naga society is divided between those who continue to look to religion for guidance and those for whom religion has receded to the background whereas other factors such as individual choice, family, economy, education etc dominates the foreground of priority/influence. This implies that not every contemporary Christians are found to be *enchanted* by religion in their everyday life. These phenomena prevailing in the society where religion and secular are separated and where religion is no longer found to permeate all aspects of the everyday life (secular) for all, further validates the hypothesis that ‘with the advent of Christianity secularization has taken place in Naga society’.

In the context of Nagas the relationship between religion and social change is observed to follow two of Yinger’s (1963) postulates. Firstly ‘social changes (economic, developments, growth of knowledge, shifts in technology etc) cause religious changes’; the coming of the Britishers to the Naga Hills in the 19th century was the period when the Nagas first faced major changes in their socio-political economic life . This was also the period when the first conversion(s) among the Nagas began. As discussed in chapter three, Horton’s (1971) intellectual theory on how people’s worldview change with exposure to a wider world and experience of different political and economic development leading to conversion as relevant in explaining early conversion cases ; as well as the social- structural perspectives of Ifeka-Moller (1974) which identified education as a factor of early religious conversions among the Nagas, co-relates to how religious conversion took place among the Nagas with the changes in their social set-up. Hence, ‘social change caused religious change’ among the Nagas. Secondly, “religion initiates change”; with conversion to Christianity the Nagas underwent

changes (as discussed in chapter four) in their beliefs and worldviews, they also adopted new ways of clothing, socialization, observing *rites of passage*, architectural designs etc. Christianity (religion) has therefore initiated changes in Naga society. Religion and society in the history of Nagas has, therefore, followed a pattern of impacting each other, urging major changes of the other at certain point of time. The period of major change appear to be facilitated when the other is experiencing major change itself. Two instances are starkly prominent (1) when the Naga society was undergoing upheaval of British intrusion conversions first began, (2) when the indigenous religions were replaced by Christianity, new socio-cultural norms, values, institutions etc., became visible in the society. While Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown's work on the integration of religion and society were more elaborate and systematic, the idea regarding the interdependence of religious ideas with economic and political factors were already conceived by Comte, Saint-Simon and Proudhon (cited in Gollin 1970, p. 15) and their parallel view 'that changes in religious ideas are always accompanied by corresponding changes in the institutional locus of political and economic power.' The point here is not to argue to which theorist the idea should rightly be attached to but to highlight their common perspective about the interdependence of religion and society. Based on the Nagas' experience of change in their society with the coming of colonialism, which eventually led to changes in their religions, this thesis thus found that 'changes in the institutional locus of political and economic power can lead to change in religious ideas' as well. Thus, changes in the institutional locus of political and economic power lead to change of religion for the Nagas.

A study of the socio-cultural life of the Nagas after Christianity thus informs that the society is experiencing acute cultural crisis with the tug-of-war between western influenced mode of belief and need to persevere the traditional culture, the study also finds that the religious life of contemporary Naga Christians suffers from 'nominality' i.e., failure to live up to Christian principles, besides the process of secularization prevails in the society now.

Accordingly, this study finds that the change of religion in Naga society has led to a 'cultural' and 'religious crisis'. From the perspective of the sociology of religion, religion is considered to be closely entwined with the society Durkheim (1915, p.419) emphasized "...it is obviously necessary that the religious life be the eminent form and, as it were, the concentrated expression of the whole collective life", Radcliffe-Brown (1964, p.159) concedes "Ceremonies are bond that holds the multitudes together, and if the bond be removed, those multitudes fall into confusion." On its relation with culture Malinowski (1948, p.35) describes "Religion counteracts the centrifugal forces of fear, dismay, demoralization, and provides the most powerful means of reintegration of the group's shaken solidarity and of the re-establishment of its morale. In short, religion here assures the victory of tradition and culture over the mere negative response of thwarted instinct." In the Naga context unless Christianity is able to reintegrate with the social life of the people and understand the cultural aspirations of the Nagas, unless it is able to provide meanings to individuals and groups in their socio-cultural endeavours there is possibility of emergence of new form(s) of religion to occupy these roles in the society.

In conclusion, like all research this study too has been limited by its own objectives and defined largely by its hypothesis; during the course of this study intriguing areas which appeals for further investigations were identified as the same fell outside the purview of this particular study. The process and dynamic of conversion from a gender perspective is one such, considering that Naga society is patriarchal and its traditional structure was distinctly marked by it, a study on Christian conversion and women would throw more light on the historical process of Christianity in the society and provide more insight into the sociological background of how women experienced conversion. Also conversion dynamics within denominations is identified as an important area; a comparative study of denominations is required to understand the operation of different denominations in the society and their implications. Besides, based

on the findings of this study secularization has evidently taken place in the society it is however observed that para-churches are mushrooming specially in urban areas such as Dimapur and Kohima, therefore a study on this requires attention.

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