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Title of the Thesis: Transition in the Cultural Tradition of Nagas in the 20th Century

Abstract

The thesis is a broad study of the Nagas; it is about the power of the imagined community in the construction of Naga nationalism, the impact of Christian missionary in the remaking of the community, it is also about the traumatic break with the past. It is about the ambivalence that a small communities like Naga felt in relation to colonialism and nationalism and tries to understand the cultural choices that Naga made in that context.

One of the most important factors which stimulated in transforming the Nagas society was their conversion to Christianity and the receiving of western education. As a price for their conversion to Christianity, most of the practices of the Nagas has been eliminated or modified beyond recognition. While talking about the elimination of the culture one should not only contempt for the disappearance of the rich cultural heritage of the Nagas, but also credited for stamping out the social ills and practices of the Nagas which were prevalent among the Naga society.

The encounter with the British rule was not only marked by the story of imperialism and colonization but it was also the growth and evolution of identity consciousness and formation of identity. The British policy of categorization of a group of people based on the common myths, beliefs and legends etc indirectly encouraged the Nagas sense of identity. The subjection of peoples to an alien rule gave 'we' feelings among the Nagas. This administrative act was reassured by the dynamic participation of the Nagas themselves by creating political and cultural traditions and a new tribal history in their own interest.

Twentieth Century also saw the gradual break down of Naga traditional economy as a result of their contact with the colonial rule and the outside world. The colonial rules in the Naga areas changed the occupational patterns of the latter to a large extend. Employment avenues increased significantly with the intensification of the British agencies, like education, Christianity and other developmental activities.

The two World Wars were also served as a catalyst for the cash economy for the Naga. The return of the Nagas who were sent for work on the battlefields in France and Middle East during the First World War with cash remuneration reinforced the cash economy. Again in the Second World War, Nagas earned more cash by participating as spies, interpreters, workers on roads and coolies etc.

The cultural contact between the western and the Nagas set undesirable musical processes in motion, undesirable because it led to the loss of some section of a repertoire of a traditional music of the Nagas. In order to fill the vacuum created by the decaying and disappearance of the Nagas music, the Naga artist and scholars make an attempt to revitalize their culture. As a result a new musical trend has been emerged i.e the use of folk tunes as the base of Naga pop music, in which the composer taking a certain folk-tune considered it as a musical kernel from which ultimately to develop a beautiful and significant musical style.