

Case Studies on the Impact of Colonialism on Manipur's Tribals

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The establishment of British Colonial Administration in Manipur in 1891, have far-reaching effects on changes in the lives of the tribals of Manipur. This change was facilitated and augmented by the partnership of the colonists with the Christian missionaries, the latter's arrival coinciding with the establishment of colonial rule. The British colonists required the help of the missionaries in establishing control over the tribals. The missionary in turn accepted grants, state endowments, and official government appointments from the colonists. This made them subservient to the colonial officers. The colonists also wanted the missionaries to facilitate the spread of modern education as the missionaries did as they believed that in order to read and understand the Gospel, a person needs to be educated. The impact of Colonialism on the lives of the tribals is show-cased in the lives and careers of two remarkable tribal gentlemen viz. Mr. T. C. Tiankham and Maj. Ralengnao Bob Khathing, who like the colonists were a part of history in the making.

Keywords: colonist, Christian missionaries, modern education, impact, values

Introduction

Manipur is a tiny state in the North East region of India. It is a state bounded by Nagaland in the North, Mizoram in the South, and Assam in the West. It also borders the country of Myanmar to the East. Manipur literally means "Jewelled Land". It is a state inhabited by different communities. Whereas the tribals are mainly concentrated in the hill areas, the valley of Imphal is pre-dominantly inhabited by the Meiteis (Irene, 2014, p. 1). Manipur remained a sovereign kingdom till the advent of colonial rule in 1891, isolated from the outside world, with the exception of Burma.

This isolation bred insularity, which hampered even the British attempts prior to 1891, to establish Western Education in Manipur. But a sea-change was affected when Manipur came under British domination in 1891. The British believed that it was their bounden duty to tame the hill tribes of Manipur, and rid them of practices such as head-hunting, worship of nature, animal sacrifices, etc. They were assisted by the Christian missionaries, who were able to introduce the modern system of education. Their efforts were facilitated by the British Political Agents, who benefitted greatly from missionary activities.

Undoubtedly, the tribal society in North East India has undergone immense changes in its psychology, world view, language, culture, social habits, economic activities, etc. as a result of its interaction with Christianity. Obviously there are many other factors besides Christianity, that have had a great impact on social transformation in North East India. The momentum of change has been extraordinary, without doubt, by the psychology of the tribal society, its democratic ways, aspirations for a new life, simple socio-cultural, theological and philosophical thought patterns, favoring quick social transition (Karotempral, 1994, pp. 9-10).

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Colonialism

The tribal society is basically a service oriented society. The main features of their social organization are the village system, the institution of Chieftainship/Headman, the Council of Elders, and the Youth Organization, concretized in the institution of the Bachelor's Dormitory (Irene, 2014, p. 23). The emergence of a western world's colonizing system in the fifteenth century, revived legal speculations on the rights and status of the non-Christian people that Europeans wanted to subjugate. It was a different story for the British, who traumatized by the cataclysm that engulfed Europe during World War I, were concerned with retaining and bringing order in their colonies. Pax Britannica brought in its wake, the American Baptist Mission. It initiated disruption of traditional culture and imposition of western beliefs and values on indigenous customs and rituals. This resulted in the virtual obliteration of most of the indigenous people's way of life—their cultural practices, traditions, arts, and language. From a primitive society that used to subsist on shifting cultivation, it was catapulted forward, to grapple with modern ideas, technologies, and way of life. The transition was explosive not gradual (Irene, 2014, p. 24, 25, 27).

Religion

One of the ways in which imperial nations used to subjugate colonies and their indigenous inhabitants was by means of religion. The Political Agent of Manipur, Maxwell, suggested that Rev. William Pettigrew of the Arthington Mission, work in the hill areas. Pettigrew, the first Christian missionary, began his mission in the Ukhrul area, and by 1902, established the first Church at Ukhrul. Meanwhile the State Government appointed Pettigrew as Superintendent of the First Real Census of the hill tribes (1910-1911). Pettigrew combined the work of a missionary with that of a government official. Maxwell and Col. J. Shakespear (another Political Agent) actively encouraged the missionaries to set up village schools. Maxwell appointed Pettigrew as an Honorary Inspector of Schools, and entrusted him with drawing up the educational budget of the state. English Education and William Pettigrew became synonymous. Pettigrew became answerable to two authorities, one religious, the other political. Colonialism was seen to assume the role of a "politician" and a "priest". Religion became subordinate to State. Kamei had stated that the advent of Christianity was a significant factor of British Rule in Manipur (Irene, 2024, pp. 2-3). A glaring weakness of the Christian Mission was that they accepted state endowments—this curtailed their freedom in matters of religion and conscience. But on the other hand, the government officials found in no other agency a more helpful partner than in the Christian Missions. In view of the considerable influence the Church had on the people, the officials unhesitatingly appealed to the missionaries to touch the lives of the people, improve their material welfare, affect practical improvements in the daily village relations, and induce a sense of discipline and obligation to God (Irene, 2024, p. 3).

In a span of 50 years, most of the tribals converted to Christianity. The coming of Christianity brought a transformation in the life of the hill tribes. They gave up animism, head-hunting, animal sacrifices, traditional dormitory system, liquor brewing and selling, forsook many traditional gennas or taboos. The Bible was particularly responsive to tribal interpretation. Stephen Fuchs stated: "Christianity is a very community oriented religion—very much in harmony with tribal outlook and mentality in general." (Irene, 2014, p. 41, 23).

Education

Education and missionary work in North East India seem to go hand in hand. A hundred years ago, the people in the region were illiterate. The missionaries realised that if they were to be successful in spreading the

Gospel message, they would need to educate the people. When education first spread to the hills, the attitude of the elders towards those who went to school was that they were lazy. But once people realised the sincerity of the missionaries in their zeal to discipline and educate the native children, opposition waned. Gradually there came about a realisation that education affects revolutionary change and leads children on the path of progress and development (Jeyaseelan, 1996, p. 161). Pettigrew emphasised boarding school in Ukhrul Mission Centre as an alternative space to protect the young minds from the evil influences of their heathen parents. In the popular narratives, the selfless service of the foreign missionaries was lauded for rendering heroic service, by bringing “light and civilization to the dark and barbaric people in colonial North East India.” (Raikhan, 2024, p. 318).

From the very outset, the hill people in Manipur were antagonistic towards the British. The Hill Administration all through the colonial period, did not form an integral part of the general administration. The Hill people were not just hostile, they resented greatly the imposition of land revenue, forced coolie and pothang (unpaid porters and forced contributions), the Labor Corps Recruitment during WWI, the last being the trigger for the outbreak of the Anglo-Kuki conflict from 1917 to 1919. This was followed by the Zeliangrong Naga Rebellion. Even during the Battle of Imphal in 1944, very few tribals joined the “V” Force set up by the British (Irene, 2024, p. 3).

Colonists and the Manipur Hills

Case Studies. The Colonists and the Christian missionaries worked closely together. The former wanted the latter to instill in the tribals Christian virtues and to impart western education, so as to make them submissive to colonial rule. The missionaries on the other hand, were dependent on state grants. But just as the colonists were a part of history in the making, so also were two tribal gentlemen, whose lives were impacted at every stage by the Colonists and their ally, the Christian Missionaries... Mr. Tonsing Christian Tiankham, born in Khawdungsei Village in Northern Mizoram, in 1913, he and his family trekked into Churachandpur Headquarters in 1920. From his second name “Christian”, it is apparent that he took that name because from the time he became a Christian in his childhood, he became an ardent believer of the Christian faith. He stated in his autobiography, that his father was worried that he might not get the opportunity to be educated because of paucity of funds. “You must go to school and work hard to become a ‘sap’. I’m so afraid that after I’m gone, you might end up a coolie.” (By “sap” he meant sahib, a white/British officer of high rank, usually the Sub-Divisional Officer and by “coolie” he meant an unpaid porter). So young Tiankham was sent to a private school but he had to also render service. One day the owner asked him to carry a bundle of small logs. Despite his determination to carry the logs, the child of seven was unable physically to perform the task.

But the value of hard work had been instilled in him right from his early days, and he cried bitterly at his failure. Nevertheless when he was placed by his father in the custody of a Lambu (junior government officer), he helped in not only household works but in cultivation of the fields. His service ensured that he would be able to continue his schooling. Mr. Gasper, SDO (sub-divisional officer), was also the School Inspector. After classes ended at noon, military drill was taught by an Assam Rifles Lance Naik till 2 pm. This training benefitted him when he too became a bureaucrat. But one day when the lady of the house where he boarded fell ill, a witch doctor was summoned to cure her. A dog was sacrificed in the ritual. The young Tiankham became fearful. He was asked to go to the forest and fell a young tree and place the canine’s head on top of the tree post. As a Christian he was reluctant but he had to do it, if he wanted to remain at school. He wrote: “Unable to see it as

right for a Christian to take part in witch craft and animal sacrifice, I went weeping to the jungle, and did what I had to do.”

Another incident added to his woes. One day, the school master dismissed the children late, this enraged the Lambu's wife who expelled Tiansham from the house. Penniless, with great difficulty, he returned home. His father was determined that his son continue his schooling. So he placed him with an Assam Rifles platoon at Churachandpur-SDO Headquarters, where in return for washing the platoons utensils, the platoon would provide him with food and clothes and allow him to attend school. The determination of his father to ensure his schooling made a lasting impression on the son who as a father ensured that all his seven children received education in the best schools, colleges, and universities. His father's philosophy was simple: We should be faithful in everything, he extolled the virtue of honesty. So when a soldier gave the boy a half rupee coin, the boy did not spend it. A week later the same soldier asked the boy what he did with the coin. Tiansham just took out the coin from his pocket. His thrift won him the trust of the soldier. Unfortunately another tribal boy, also staying with the soldiers was averse to studying, and influenced Tiansham to abandon his studies too. The boy returned home. His father did not admonish him. He explained that soldiers are generally uneducated (referring to the platoon's soldiers) and always ready to fight. But you have to study well. As he grew into an adult, Tiansham had the highest regard for educated people and believed that graduates were more admired than IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officers. One day he was assisting his father in chopping branches. One fell on him and caused grave injury. The father took his son to the hospital compounder. The compounder was only willing to treat the boy if he was given twenty rupees. The amount was more than the father possessed so he struck a bargain offering in exchange the threshed rice from his paddy field. This taught the young boy the value of hard earned money. The father stayed by his son's hospital bed for nearly a year and this underlined for the young boy the importance of family bonds.

When the time came for the yearly competition for a state funded merit scholarship, his father carried Tiansham on his back to the school a mile away. This taught the boy that his father would do all that he could to ensure him the scholarship. But the school Headmaster finding that the boy was unable to sit properly told the boy's father to let his son try for the scholarship in the next year. But the elder Tonsing knew that for a poor family like his, only education would be the key to the future. He dreamed that his son would one day become an SDO. Tiansham was awarded the scholarship in the next year and later received a Merit Scholarship to study at Moirangkhom Upper Primary School, Imphal. His father's health began to deteriorate and knowing how much his father had done to ensure his continuing education, Tiansham brought up in a colonial environment, wanted to give something back to his generous, loving father. From his meagre scholarship of Rs. 3, he sent some part of it home to support his parents, and was only too happy to help them. While still in LP (Lower Primary) School he was made to carry 8 kg of rice to Moirang, 5 miles away. Despite being small and of a slight frame, he performed his duty, because his labor enabled him to pursue his studies.

When he joined the Upper Primary School, he had to trek across a path used by cattle and covered with thick reeds. Undaunted, he made the trek successfully. He possessed a steely determination, and appreciated that the Government disbursed scholarships on time. He believed that this action exemplified British correctness and fairness. Prior to his Puja (Dasehra festival) vacation, his father fell ill. He rushed home but when he arrived his father's lifeless body, he was about to be buried. Brushing aside his tears, he recalled his father's last words to him: “Don't worry about me. Just mind your studies and study real well. I'll be alright.” Tiansham resolved to do just that. He passed Matric in 1938, and the missionary Dr. Crozier's co-worker Julia A. Rose, sponsored his

higher education. With his tith of two and a half rupees, Tiankham in turn supported T. Saikham for his studies in Imphal. He continued to practice charity. When studying at Sylhet, he requested Rev. Roberts for a prayer cabin, so he could pray in seclusion for success in his college examination. In return, when Rev. Robert went to preach in the jail Tiankham assisted him as an interpreter. He believed that one good deed should be repaid by another. Tiankham was also asked to assist in burying a Khasi prisoner from whose mouth flowed a foul smelling bile. Some dropped onto his only trouser, so he soaked the pant in boiling water before giving it to a dhobi (washerman), as he needed this only woolen trouser for the next church service. He believed like the colonists and missionaries in donning his Sunday best for church service.

After passing his Intermediate, he applied for a Leckie scholarship donated by a tea garden official to support Christian students of Theology. He received one amounting to 35 rupees per month, but this was inadequate to meet the tuition fees of Serampore College. Tiankham approached Mr. H. S. Fletcher, ICS, Deputy Commissioner at Silchar, who asked him to make a request to the Governor of Assam, through him, for some financial aid. When he received it he stated: "I learnt responsive British governance and individuals make the difference." He worked as a clerk to earn money for his train ticket to Serampore. With the outbreak of WWII, he was compelled to return to Silchar, but failed in every single subject in the B. A. Examination. But he never lost hope. Hope was concretized in a different form. The Cachar Deputy Commissioner opened a Census Station, and as Tiankham spoke English, Bengali, Manipuri, and several tribal dialects he was given a Junior King's Commission, to work at the Census office, as Examiner of Languages. He was even awarded a Category A War Service Medal. He then decided to reappear for the B. A. Exam in the midst of WWII. (On the first day of the exam, Khumbhigram Airport in Silchar was bombed by the Japanese). He, however, passed his B. A., and became the first among the tribals of Churachandpur area to pass B. A. (Churachandpur is a district in South Manipur). Tiankham worked for almost a year at the Mid-Mission under Dr. Crozier, and from his salary of 150 rupees a month he set apart a tenth of it to support two girls' education. Like the missionaries he believed that girls too must receive education. But the common hill refrain was: Numei laisim, beven zil (girls go to school just to learn to flirt).

In 1946 with permission from the government, his elder brother established Pearsonmun Village, and influenced by the colonists and missionaries, the first construction was that of a small chapel. Towards the end of 1946, Tiankham left Silchar for Pearsonmun. In 1947, nine Circles (administrative) were opened in Manipur. Tiankham applied successfully for the post of a Circle Officer. He was subsequently inducted as a Member in the making of "Manipur State Constitution Making Body and Manipur Hills People Regulation 1947". Trouble arose between Chiefs (especially Kuki Chiefs) and the public, mainly on the issue of the Chiefs levying various taxes. Tiankham investigated the matter, and filed a report and recommendation which was accepted by the PMSD (President Manipur State Durbar) on 21st July 1947. This was the beginning of government for Manipur and Tiankham was a part of it. He learnt the art of governance from the British colonists. As a Circle Officer he became a Privileged Person. In this capacity, he gave one Ngulzapum a patta (deed) to set up Takvom Village with the mandatory 20 houses. Subsequently in the Interim Council of Ministers created on August 8, 1947, Tiankham was appointed Minister of Forest, Agriculture and Veterinary. Tiankham stated: "This Care-Taker Government although nominated, may be called the beginning of true democracy in Manipur." Tiankham was not only a Minister but was part of History-Making. He had been influenced in thought, word, and deed both by the British administrators and the Christian missionaries. In his capacity as a Minister, he made a proposal for dereserving Cheklaphai reserved forest. The Chief Minister refused the proposal. Tiankham however, was successful in getting the Cabinet to pass an order to free land, at least where there were no pine trees growing.

Firmness and fearlessness were qualities engrained in Tiangkham right from childhood. (Refer to Government Records 1947-1948, Manipur).

When the Chief Minister offered Tiangkham a plot in the bazar on which to build a house, Tiangkham ever generous and community oriented, accepted but used the land for the community, naming it "Paite Trading Company" (Paite for the tribe he belonged to). This was to be a place of refuge/shelter for his tribe and people, traders and students greatly benefitted from the use of the premises. From here, Tiangkham, familiar with the working of British Administration, opted to contest the first Legislative Assembly election in Manipur. He was successful and became the First Speaker of The Manipur Legislative Assembly in October 1948. The poor boy achieved what many of Manipur's elite could never aspire to. But his term as Speaker was short-lived. In October 1949 the Assembly was dissolved as Manipur merged with the Indian Union. Despite knowing that his stand against the Merger would not be heeded, he frankly argued against the Merger. Manipur came under a Chief Commissioner, Maj. General Amar Singh and Tiangkham was appointed as one of four Assistants to the Commissioner. He was now a bureaucrat and joined the Manipur Civil Service. He had observed and studied the art of governance of the British colonists. Soon after he attained the position for which his father had educated him: he was appointed Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) of Tamenglong, which position in his father's eyes was equivalent to positions held by British Sahibs (officers). One of his first actions was to collect all weapons left behind by the Allied and Japan's forces after the Battle of Imphal in 1944, lest they fall into the wrong hands and may be used for the wrong purposes. Thereafter he tackled the tricky matter of Genna or traditional taboos, practised by the non-Christians, when they attacked Christian tribals on Christmas Eve. He jailed the attackers but released them on the condition. Henceforth, even after Tiangkham is no longer SDO, we will not, in any matter regarding Genna, force or beat up anyone, or disturb those who do not want (observe) it. This was a significant achievement because non-Christians were particular about observing Genna, this had caused much trouble during the times of the white men in Manipur (the British). He then focused on the disease of leprosy and attributed its prevalence in Tamenglong to "the people's backwardness in Hygiene". He sent the lepers to the American Baptist Colony at Kangpokpi where they would be treated. He recommended that a leprosy hospital be constructed in Imphal and this became a reality a few years later.

As SDO, Ukhrul, he again had to tackle the issue of Genna/Kumei. At a meeting he made the local non-Christian leaders sign an agreement: "Henceforth no one must force those unwilling to observe a taboo." Record of the agreement was kept in the SDO's office. Trouble also arose on the matter of "Panchi" (hill House tax). Some people refused to pay but Tiangkham like the British colonial officers remained firm and made them pay the tax.

He also remained resolute when the missionary Dr. Brooks wanted a well in his land lease, because "we being foreigners, we want pure water." Incensed at this racist remark Tiangkham boldly replied: "We the indigenous people also want pure water." He believed in the British notion of justice and fair play, and was averse to betraying his own government, that was in fact the only source of water for the SDO.

Another time, a forty-year old man tried to bribe him and Tiangkham sentenced him to six months rigorous imprisonment and fined him fifty rupees. This was the exact amount the man had offered as a bribe. He also disposed off most of the pending cases in court as he believed "justice delayed is justice denied." Believing in equal education for boys and girls he ensured that his niece passed Matric from Ukhrul in 1954, she was the first Paite matriculate. (It was commonly believed that education of girls would render them lazy).

From Ukhrul, Tiangkham was transferred to Imphal and worked as Senior EAC and Jail Superintendent. In the jail he encountered a peculiar problem. Tribal prisoners, partial to meat, were denied meat at meals, as the

pot used for cooking meat would be rendered unclean for prisoners who abstained from eating meat, according to the Chief Jail Warden. Tiankham explained that the cooking pot was thoroughly scoured after use, and also asserted that if meat could not be cooked, the Chief Warden could be penalised under the Anti-Touchability Law. Because of his firmness, this discrimination was done away with. He had learnt resolve at missionary school. He converted the jail into a place for reflection and reformation, and held regular fellowship with the inmates. He believed that lenient punishment changes a man better than rigid punishment, and he put this into practice in the case of a gentleman, Somorendro Singh, even though his judgment was questioned by the Chief Commissioner and the Chief of Police, Tiankham stuck to his resolve. He also recommended substituting ching (cane) batons with long bamboo poles that could cause death and were being used by the police. After this stint, Tiankham was appointed as Additional Chief Commissioner of the Territorial Council, but the Chief Commissioner looked on him as a rival. He moved to the Taxation Department, where he raised an unprecedented income of over one lakh per annum. His honesty was rewarded by the Manipur Government. Despite the appointments and services rendered, Tiankham felt he had been discriminated against in the matter of promotion. He boldly filed a Writ Petition which was decided in his favor. With the arrears on his salary the honest Tiankham finally bought a white Ambassador car (a symbol of status for civil servants). Having performed government work/public service, to the best of his ability Tiankham retired as an IAS officer (Indian Administrative Service) on April first, 1977. When he passed away, the Government of Manipur gave him a funeral befitting an outstanding and respected man. The values he imbibed from both the colonists and the missionaries, were passed on to his children, so much so that his eldest son was known as the most honest man in the town he lived in, and his eldest daughter living in the UK was awarded Member of the British Empire by King Charles III for her selfless voluntary work in combat stress.

Maj. Ralengsao Bob Khathing, born in Ukhrul, Manipur in February 1912, Bob was a Tangkhul Naga who was awarded Padma Shri in 1957, conferred the Order of The British Empire during the period of colonial rule and also the Military Cross during WWII, as he actively participated being the local leader of the V Force, he was also an officer of the Indian Frontier Administrative Service (IFAS), a Chief Secretary of Nagaland, and an Ambassador of India to Myanmar. As his father was one of the first 20 boys to receive education from Rev. William Pettigrew, Ralengsao received his primary education at Ukhrul Mission School, middle school education from Kangpokpi Mission ME School. He like other students had to perform three hours manual work every day after classes, except Sundays. He learned at an early age Christian values and the dignity of labor, the practice of charity and the quality of thrift. He possessed only a pair of each item of western school dress, i.e. a half pant, shirt ganji (vest), and shawl. After passing ME School, he joined Kohima High School, then moved to Shillong Government High School on the advice of Mr. L. L. Peters, SDO, Ukhrul who assured him of a state scholarship. But he had to transfer to Johnstone High School Imphal, to avail of the scholarship. Despite being small in build, he actively participated in sports, trekked from Imphal to Ukhrul and back, no mean feat, to participate in an important football match. Because of his education in both missionary and government schools, he understood the importance of education, and founded the Tangkhul Students Union-Tangkhul Katamnao Long in 1932, for the welfare of Tangkhul students. He completed graduation from Cotton College Guwahati in 1937, and Rev. V. H. Sword, missionary in charge of Mangaldai area offered him a teaching assignment at the Harisingha Mission English School, Assam. After graduation he became the School Headmaster, but soon left to take over as Headmaster of the ME School, Ukhrul, under Mr. S. J. Duncan, SDO, Ukhrul. His formative years were spent in close contact with both Government officers and Missionaries. As Headmaster he was content but the SDO summoned him, and asked him to fill up an application form for King's Commission in the Army, sent by Mr. C.

Gimson, Political Agent for Manipur. His application was accepted, he completed military training and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, and posted to Agra. He was soon called to Jorhat because of the outbreak of WWII, and charged by Col. Rawdon Wright to recruit volunteers, guides, etc. for the British V Force (guerilla cum intelligence force). Col. Wright promoted him to Captain, and assigned him to operate in the border areas of Manipur and Burma. He recruited around 5,000 villagers, and they guided the British Army in counter-action against the Japanese in Manipur in 1944. The Allied Forces were soon able to regain control of places overrun by the Japanese. Because of his commitment and dedication to his duties, and job, he was awarded Commander in Chief Gallantry Certificate, honored with the Order of Member of the British Empire, and awarded the Military Cross. During his service in the V Force, he worked closely with the British in the Allied Forces. He was offered a regular commission in the army. But when still an army officer, he had appeared for the Civil Administration, through the Selection Board for Tribal Areas, and secured the First Position. The SDO of Lushai Hills, Mr. Peters, went to Shillong to meet Maj. Bob Khathing, to urge him to join work in the Lushai Hills. The President of the Manipur State Durbar (PMSD), an Englishman, also went to meet him, along with Tangkhul Elders and Leaders. He was asked to return to Manipur and help the hill people, as a Minister in the Interim Government. The Manipur State, Authorities, and the Political Agent, requested the Governor of Assam to release Bob from the army. Khathing resigned from the army and became Minister-in-Charge of Hill Administration in October 1947.

The British colonists had first made Khathing an army officer, and then a bureaucrat, whereas the Christian missionaries instilled Christian beliefs, practices, and virtues in Khathing. But in the first election held in 1948 to the First Legislative Assembly of Manipur, Khathing contested the election from a mixed tribe community constituency, was elected, and inducted as Minister of Hills Administration and Manipur Rifles. His education which he greatly valued provided him with A Better Tomorrow for himself, his family, community, and state. When Manipur merged with the Government of India in October 1949, the Government asked Khathing to become a Secretary of the Territory, but he declined. In 1950 he was instructed to join as Assistant Commandant, Second Battalion of Assam Rifles at Sadiya. Hardly had he joined when a severe earthquake rocked the area. He along with his men organised road restoration groups, provided relief to the Mishmi villagers, and arranged airdrops of rations. After submitting his report on the damages to the Mishmi Hills at the Battalion Headquarters, Shillong, Khathing was appointed Political Officer of NEFA (North East Frontier Agency). But by December 1950, Khathing was summoned to meet Governor Shri Jairamdas Daulataram, and directed to proceed to Tawang, and bring it under the administration of the Government of India. (Tawang had till date never been administered by India). As he had no knowledge about Tawang, Khathing was given a briefing by Maj. G. T. Allen, M. C. Political Officer of Sela Sub-Agency at Charduar. In January 1951, accompanied by Capt. H. B. Limbu and Capt. Modiero AMC, and three platoons of Assam Rifles personnel, Khathing and party made the gruelling trek to cross the Sela Pass, with a caravan more than a mile long at an extremely high altitude. But determination and grit, qualities he learned from family, colonists, and missionaries, enabled the party to reach Tawang in February. However, no important local official/person came forward to meet Khathing, so he made a show of strength, and planted the Indian Tricolor at Tawang. He informed the Tsona Dzongpen and officials of the Tibetan Government, that from then on, none of them could exercise any power over the villagers inhabiting South of Bum La, i.e. South of the McMohan Line, defined and agreed upon under the Simla Accord of 1914, Article 9. They could no longer collect taxes or try any case in Tawang. It is to be noted that the astute mind of Maj Ralengnao Khathing, helped ensure that he was quickly able to understand the situation and come up with viable solutions, to counter any problems or difficulties. By mid-1951, administrative control of India over Tawang was complete. With the

opening of checkposts on all trade routes, and the establishment of Circle Administrative and SIB station at Lumla, Khathing was promoted to Political Officer, Sela Sub-Agency in April 1952. He had to now select a capital: he disappeared for three days in the jungle. His war experience (WWII) as a guerilla commander stood him in goodstead, he followed a deer to a waterpoint, and selected the place. By securing Tawang for India, Khathing became a part of Indian History. In 1953 he was confirmed in the Indian Frontier Administrative Service. He was now posted as Political Officer of Tuensang Frontier Division. This was the time when insurgency/militancy was at its height. The Indian Government trusted Khathing, who easily won the confidence of his subordinate officers, staff, and the villagers. He conducted long marches and treks to all parts of the Division, and harnessed the potential capacity of the people by getting his proposal for loyal Nagas to be armed with 12 bore guns, for the formation of Tuensang Frontier Division Scouts, passed by the Ministry of External Affairs. The Government rewarded Khathing for his outstanding contribution and awarded him the Padma Shri in 1957, in recognition of making Tawang administered by India, and for bringing stability to NEFA. Because of his Administrative acumen, he was transferred to the new district of Mokokchung, where he rendered administrative service, and maintained good relationship with the villagers, at a time when attacks and counter attacks between security forces and insurgents were rife. It was at this time that the Government of India signed the 16 Point Agreement in 1960 where NHTA was to be granted full statehood, and named Nagaland.

In 1962, Khathing was posted to Sikkim, as he instinctively knew what had to be done there. But when he heard that the Chinese Army had overrun Tawang, he sought transfer to NEFA as he was attached to the place. He was posted as the Chief Civil Liason Officer to work from the Army Fourth Corps at Tezpur. He was given the rank of Brigadier, a rank he refused as he was content with the rank of Major. Instead he became Security Commissioner of NEFA. When Khathing reached Tezpur, the Chinese Army suddenly withdrew. Bob engaged himself in winning back the trust of the locals. The Chinese aggression had taken place after the region became a part of India. But Bob had considerable expertise in administration, he had also learnt from the example of the colonial officers and the missionaries. He was made Divisional Organizer for the Special Security Bureau-North East. His last administrative posting in India was his appointment as Chief Secretary to the Government of Nagaland in 1967. Throughout his administrative career and even as an army officer, he had been posted in all parts of the North East region. Till 1971 he remained in Nagaland and the civil administration functioned at a high level of efficiency. He gave serious thought to the possibility of the Nagas being part of the Indian Army, by raising a Regiment in their name. His illustrious career led to his appointment as Indian Ambassador to Burma in 1972, by an order of the External Affairs Ministry. Diplomatic work was different but he had already exercised diplomacy when he made Tawang a part of India. As usual, he handled his new assignment with his customary aplomb, tact, and dedication to service. He looked into the pending issues of ongoing compensatory work for Indians settled in Burma, who fled when the military junta took over the country. He also resolved to the best of his ability some of the long pending international border issues. His tenure ended in 1975. The Indian Government offered him a second Ambassadorship, but it had been a long inning for Khathing, so he declined the offer. "Maj. R. B. Khathing is today acknowledged and remembered as the first tribal to join as King's Commission Indian Officer (KCIO), and also the first tribal from North East India to be appointed as Ambassador of India." (Khathing, 2020, p. 48).

Conclusion

After the defeat of Manipur in the Anglo Manipur War of 1891, the British governed Manipur through their Political Agent. The colonists recognised the strategic importance of Manipur's location as being a Gateway to

South East Asia. They were anxious to establish control over the tribes who resided in Manipur's Hills, the hills constituting 9/10ths of the geographical area. They partnered, with the Christian missionaries because the latter had close contact with the tribes to whom they preached The Word of God. Moreover the missionaries unlike the colonists were very successful in introducing the modern system of education and opening mission schools. The colonial administration and the missionaries were bound together in a relationship of interdependence, as the latter accepted not only grants, but government appointments from the colonial Government. Modern education brought into existence a Middle Class in the former egalitarian tribal society who forged ahead as their education opened diverse career opportunities for them. This is well illustrated in the lives and career of two remarkable tribals, Mr. T. C. Tiankham and Maj. R. B. Khathing, who were baptised as Christians as children, studied in mission schools, and whose choices and careers in adult life bore the imprint not only of the British Colonists but their partners, the Christian Missionaries.

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