

Colonialism and Indigenous Vulnerabilities: Missionaries Intervention in the Context of the Khasis of North East India

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The missionary intervention in North East India (NEI) in general and Khasi Jaintia Hills in particular took place in a context already affected by the impact of the British Administration. The imposition of British rule has subjected the society to radical changes and turned their world upside down. This traumatic change did pose a serious threat to their identity and it was in this contextual background that Christianity set its foot in NEI. Conflict, assimilation and incorporation characterized the nature of this interaction. Conversely, this encounter resulted in the large-scale conversion of various tribes from their traditional religion to Christianity. Further, the mission agencies through their involvement in education, healthcare, literature and evangelization did ignite and serves as agents of social transformation.

Nevertheless, this study noted that the indigenous people were not passive but active participants in these socio-cultural and religious encounters and exercised their agency despite many constraints. On the one hand, the missionary intervention did equip the indigenous people to adjust to a new society underlined by colonial modernity and on the other hand it was not able to totally displace the people from their socio-cultural and religious moorings. The people did negotiated and make selective choices and consequently, this interaction did not produced a monolithic western Christianity but multilayered and a vernacular form of Christianity.