THEIR CHRISTIANITY: CONVERSION, CULTURAL CHANGE AND INDIGENISATION AMONG KHASI, SORA, AND NAGA OF INDIA.

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Chapter One–Introduction

Indigenisation of Christianity is not a new phenomenon in the anthropological study of religion, with a great deal of detailed work coming often from Africa and South America. This thesis seeks to add to that body of work by looking at three case studies of Indian tribal peoples who have adopted Christianity and through the process of conversion, have undergone cultural change. This cultural change has in some instances given rise to indigenous expressions of Christian practice, discourse, and culture. The Khasi, Naga, and Sora tribes (see below and chapter two) have through conversion become a majority Christian population, and in response to wide ranging factors unique to each case study, have undergone a further process of indigenising their Christianity. This thesis will explore some of the key processes that each tribe has gone through in the adoption of Christianity, and then discuss those factors that led each tribe to form indigenised Christianities, and in the case of the Sora, where there may be possible cultural grounds for indigenisation in the future.

In discussing three tribes, I have opted for a regional comparative approach within a Field of Ethnologic Study (FES) (P.E. de Josselin de Jon 1980, 318), which I will outline in my chapter summaries in more detail. I used this approach as I was alerted to a trend that holds for the Khasi and Naga, and as I later suggest, may also happen for the Sora. The trend I observe is that after the conversion and establishment of a Christian community within these societies, and where Christian cultural categories as presented by the missionaries are adopted *in toto* (Robbins 2004, 10), a later process of re-adaptation of those categories occurred (ibid, 10). This was most often in response to a wider social issue, such as challenges arising in the wake of colonial and post-colonial political formations in the case of the Naga, or the interaction of Christians with their own cultural preservation movements in the case of the Khasi. In contrast to this the Sora as of present ethnographic sources, do not appear to have had the reaction to cultural preservation (and identity revival) that Khasi and Naga have. I will discuss why I see indigenisation having not occurred among the Sora in more detail in chapter seven as well as

suggesting where there may exist areas of their Christianity that they may indigenise and why.

I have analysed this pattern of the later adaptation of Christianity in terms of Robert M. Baum's (1990) model of indigenisation. Baum views the indigenisation of Christianity as occurring when a community of converts has lingering questions or tensions that are not fully addressed by their new religion (Baum 1990, 376). To resolve these tensions or questions they adapt their Christianity to include ideas, practices, or discourses from their former religion to fill such voids (ibid, 376). I relate this formation of indigenisation to Joel Robbins' summary of Marshall Sahlins in which he draws a framework of adaptation as one possible model of cultural change (2004, 10), and I will discuss this in greater detail in chapter three. To round out this section I will briefly outline the rest of this chapter. Section 1.2 will give an outline of chapters two through seven, section 1.3 will discuss my use of Robbins' reading of culture from a structuralist standpoint and relate it to my models of cultural change in chapter three. Finally, section 1.4 will discuss a little about the works consulted for this study, and about their ethnographic analysis.

1.2: Overview of this Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters; chapters two and three will cover my methodological and analytical framework, chapters four through six will cover three case studies, and chapter seven will be my concluding remarks and a summary of the previous chapters. I will provide a slightly more detailed outline below.

Chapter Two

In this chapter I will outline my methodological framework, which revolves around the overarching framework of J.P.B de Josslin de Jong's concept of a field of ethnological study (FES) which was later refined by P.E. de Josslin de Jong (1980, 318). The FES, as I will present in my reading, offers a flexible methodological framework for conducting regional comparisons amongst people who share similar characteristics and cultural systems so as to offer coherent comparison without neglecting their differences (ibid, 319). Being conscious of the differences is a

fundamental step within any robust comparative approach, as Adam Kuper (2001, 145) argues. What these three case studies illustrate is that the Khasi and the Naga follow a clear trend of strict adoption adherence to their Christianity, re-humiliation (see page six for definition) and then indigenisation of their Christianity, albeit, for vastly different reasons. The Sora, as I will discuss, have not arrived at a point of re-humiliation. I go on to discuss that this may occur based on what I see in source material and why—accepting that the Sora may very well not go through the same process for reasons that will be detailed later. This comparison forms the basis of P.E. de Josselin de Jong's concept of 'mutual comprehensibility'—meaning that through the process of comparing each case in their similarities and differences, the analysis of the comparison becomes much clearer (P.E. de Josselin de Jong 1980, 319). In later chapters I will illustrate how the comparison between the indigenisation of the Naga and Khasi, and the current lack of indigenise Christianity among the Sora, made identifying trends that led to indigenisation clearer. As case studies, without "mutual comprehensibility" these trends would not be visible, which in turn underlines the effectiveness of the FES as an approach.

Also within chapter two, and related to the framework of an FES which calls for cultural similarities at least to the point that comparisons between each culture generally comparable in structure (ibid, 318), I have included a typology of the concept of the tribe. For this I have used Sahlins' 1968 work *Tribesmen* and Georg Pfeffer's later refinement Sahlins' ideas (Pfeffer, 2002). This typology of the tribe, which I use to classify the large groups of people known as Khasi, Naga and Sora also corresponds to P.E. de Josselin de Jong's framework for an FES where he calls for the cultures within an FES to be sufficiently homogeneous to warrant fair comparison, as well as to be sufficiently different to yield fruitful comparison (P.E. de Josselin de Jong 1980, 318). Within my explanation of Pfeffer's typology I link together the common aspects shared by the Khasi, Naga, and Sora cultures that display some of the features of a tribe as well as some of the unique factors that make their situations comparable. These factors I then expand upon in my analytical chapters of four through six.

Chapter Three

In this chapter I outline my analytical framework that works with my understanding of culture (see below), and that details how I will later analyse cultural change and indigenisation in my analytical chapters. I start with Robbins' summary of models of cultural change: the models of 1) 'assimilation,' 2) 'transformation,' and 3) 'adoption' (Robbins 2004, 10, 11). Assimilation is the process where new cultural categories are incorporated into a culture's pre-existing system of ideas and values (ibid, 10), transformation is where values are added to existing structure and/or are restructured to give new prominence to other values, and adoption is where a whole cultural structure is adopted in place of a culture's existing structure (ibid, 10).

I then discuss Sahlins' concept of 'humiliation' (Sahlins 2005, 39), which is central to the process of deciding to adopt a new cultural structure, as in the case of conversion (ibid, 39). Having felt a sense of cultural humiliation on a cultural level (i.e. that their culture seems inferior in some way to another culture), a society then may undergo the process of adopting a cultural structure they feel is superior to their current culture (Robbins 2004, 10; Sahlins 2005, 39). I then discuss my further development of Sahlins' humiliation into 're-humiliation;' this is the process by which cultural practices and ideas previously rejected during adoption (Robbins 2002, 10) are later reconsidered, and adapted to fit within Christianity, constituting the model of transformation. I use the term re-humiliation to denote that after the initial humiliation that led to the cultural groups within this study to adopt Christianity *in toto*, they later experience another sense of humiliation. I have analysed this in terms of Baums' model of indigenisation, which he states arises from converts resolving tensions in their newfound worldview with answers or concepts from their former worldview (Baum 1990, 376). These tensions arise differently in the context of the Naga and the Khasi, and will be discussed in chapters four and five, however the theme of post-colonial identity is common to both. This forms the basis for my analysis in chapters four through six.

Chapter Four:

In this chapter I introduce the Naga case study. I initially outline the geographic position of the Naga, and then delve into the relevant parts of their history with the

British Raj and the establishment of the American Baptist mission, as well as formations of early Naga Christian communities (Joshi 2012, 160). Within this initial outline I discuss the implicit evidence I see for humiliation along the lines of literacy (Joshi 2012, 168; Sahlins 2005, 39); that is, that evangelization through education was the means of transmission for humiliating discourses (Sahlins 2005, 39). I then outline instances of strict adoption and adherence to Christian cultural categories that occurred among early Naga Christianity.

I then focus on the interplay of colonial and post-colonial factors, as well as the rise of revival Christianity that influenced the growth and indigenisation of Naga Christianity. I will argue that this interplay of factors gave rise to re-humiliation among the Naga Christians, leading to the adaptation of Christian cultural categories that emphasise different methods of healing as a response to wider social tensions. This in turn also influenced conversion rates leading to the current state-wide Christian majority of 95% (Government of Nagaland 2014).

Chapter Five:

In this chapter I discuss the case study of the Khasi, who came into contact with Christianity the earliest out of the three tribes studied in this thesis. The Khasi followed a similar pattern of conversion to Christianity to the Naga, where during their period of adoption they emphasized strict Christian values and practices like temperance and avoiding pagan rituals. From the limited source material, I infer that conversion occurred after humiliation through the medium of education and literacy initiatives by Christian missionaries (Mathur 1979, 15; Sahlins 2005, 39). Following on from this period of strict adoption of Christianity by early Khasi converts, non-Christian Khasi formed the Seng Khasi cultural preservation movement as a response to colonialism and Christian Khasi rejecting their traditions.

Khasi Christians then negotiated their cultural categories in relation to Seng Khasi, Indian independence, and the poorly documented revival movement in Meghalaya (Synod 2006). I have analysed this negotiation in terms of re-humiliation and argue that through these factors Khasi Christians chose to adapt their cultural

categories to include older traditional[1] Khasi practices. I will argue that this is also linked to the importance of post-colonial identity for the Khasi.

Chapter Six:

In the final case study, I discuss the Sora of Odisha. Out of the three tribes studied here, they adopted Christianity the most recently, and within their cultural history there is a clear case for literacy being the trigger for cultural humiliation. The Sora were isolated by a 'linguistic bottleneck' (Vitebsky forthcoming, 39), which left them prey to exploitation from the local administrative and money lending parties (ibid, 39). Christian missions brought education and literacy initiatives, which were a means to free them of this exploitation, and in turn the majority of the Sora are now Baptist Christians and practicing in strict accordance with their church leadership (ibid, 130).

As of the present the Sora still remain within the realms of the adoption model, and as such they contrast with the other two case studies having not yet (possibly never) undergoing the process of indigenisation. I discuss this in terms of not having the similar kinds of social and political upheaval as the Naga, or the challenge of a cultural preservation movement. However, there does appear to be the possibility that in the future there may be space for indigenisation centring on tensions within the Christian community and their leadership, regarding their differing understanding death (Baum 1990, 375). I will develop this idea further in chapters six and seven.

Chapter Seven:

This is my conclusion and reflection on the comparison of the three case studies. Here I reflect on the similarities, differences, and the general argument of my thesis through each chapter, as well as the overall themes of cultural change through conversion and indigenisation.

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[1] See Khasi Niam in chapter five.

1.3: A Working Definition of Culture

I will now briefly define the working definition of culture I employ in this thesis. In this vein I have chosen to work within the framework of Robbins, which like my models of cultural change, has been adapted from Sahlins' work. As such both works have a distinctly structural approach, and I will refer to both. Of culture Robbins states:

> I take culture to be a set of values and categories (or 'symbols' or 'representations') and the relations between values and values, categories and categories, and values and categories. (Robbins 2004, 30)

This concise rendering of a definition of culture forms the basis for my approach to culture throughout this thesis, and my analysis of cultural change. Sahlins also operates with a similar understanding of culture, but expands upon this by pointing towards the dimensions of a cultural structure in practice:

> The bigger issue, as I see in these essays, is the dual existence and interaction of the cultural order as constituted in the society and lived by people: structure in convention and in action, as virtual and as actual. In their practical projects and social arrangements, informed by the received meanings of persons and things, people submit these cultural categories to empirical risks. To the extent that the symbolic is thus the pragmatic, the system is a synthesis in time of reproduction and variation. (Sahlins 1987, xi)

To begin unpacking this quotation and relating it to my later analysis, cultures are structured around values and categories, which form symbolic representations of the world, but are at once practical (Sahlins 1987, xi). Meaning that cultural structures serve to help an individual make sense of the world by imparting meaning, and to guide how one acts in the world (ibid, xi). However, this is not to say that cultural structures are smooth running interfaces that operate without contradiction or change. Sahlins notes that there is not a single pattern within a given culture, and he comments that early Protestants believed simultaneously in ghosts, bodily salvation at judgment day, and eternal residence for the dead in heaven (Sahlins 1999, 405). But this does not undermine the notion of a cultural structure and organization, because in totality it is a system for giving meaning to the world and assists in a peoples' perception and ordering of history (what

constitutes and event, humiliation etc...), even if that order does not last particularly long (Robbins 2016, 44).

The final part to unpack from Sahlins' initial quotation is that an individuals' act of reproducing a cultural category within the world is a risky venture (Sahlins 1987, xi). This is because as Sahlins later points out, the "world is under no obligation to respond in a way that reinforces a culture's structure" (ibid, xi, xvi). This Sahlins terms a structure of conjuncture, or an incidence where complex arrays of factors are brought into dialogue within pre-defined cultural structures (ibid, xiv). This can lead to a people interpreting this incident as an event, which is done so within the framework of their existing cultural categories (ibid, xiv), and can potentially lead to those categories failing to make sense (in a sense the categories will fail) and can lead to a sense of humiliation (see chapter three) and in turn lead to cultural change.

In summary, in this thesis I approach culture as a set of values and categories, that are both symbolic in their giving meaning, and practical in that they order not only social relations—but at their fundament are brought into contact with the world (Sahlins 1987, xi). Bringing these values and categories into contact with the world can cause them to be reinforced and reproduced, or it can lead to circumstances where they are contrasted, which can lead to events and potential incidents of cultural change (ibid, xi).

1.4: Consulted Works

As this thesis is based on the ethnographic analysis of others I will discuss in brief the works consulted in this comparative thesis, and say something about their analytical focus and where we might differ. The principal works consulted for this study are Vibha Joshi's *A Matter of Belief* (2012), which is a study of the Naga. For the Khasi I have consulted P.R.G Mathur's *The Khasi of Meghalaya: Study in Tribalism and Religion* (1979), Nalini Natarajan's *The Missionary Among the Khasis* (1972), and George Malikal's *The History of the Catholic Church Among the Khasis* (2007). For the Sora I principally consult Piers Vitebsky's forthcoming monograph *Loving and Forgetting: Changing forms of Loss and Redemption in Tribal India* (forthcoming). Ethnographic works on tribal cultures in the subcontinent are still a relatively

underdeveloped discipline outside of India, and those from within vary in quality——the works consulted in this thesis constitute the most rigorous and detailed, though as I will stress, they are not solely focused on the cultural processes I analyse within this thesis.

Joshi's work (2012) is the product of over thirty years of fieldwork in Nagaland, and as such paints a rich picture on the complex colonial and post-colonial processes within the Naga context. Joshi's work principally focuses on contemporary healing practices among the Naga as a whole (Joshi 2012, 51)——though she devotes half her ethnography to Christianity in one way or another——her approach references Evans Prichard in terms of ethnography as well as the works of ethnographers who have studied African Christianity along with works on the adoption of modernity (Joshi 2012, 1-13).[2] I focus on Joshi's ethnographic work on Christian healing practices (chapter six onwards), but also look at her summary of the post-partition independence struggle that greatly influenced Christian culture and conversion statistics. I interpret these with my combined analytical framework of Baum and Sahlins, as Joshi does not delve into the why and how of conversion explicitly, nor does she interpret the growth in healing practices in terms of indigenisation (this is unsurprising given her focus on documenting and comparing healing).

In relation to the Khasi I refer to several works mostly from the 1970's, as scholarship in English from contemporary sources is rather thin. Mathur (1979) and Natarajan (1977) comprise the most detailed works despite maintaining a general tone in their analysis, often focusing on the development of 'modern' material culture among the Khasi. Natarajan presents the most detailed work on the development of Christianity among the Khasi, which possibly stems from her clear bias toward Christianisation. While Natarajan's analysis may be brought into question, Mathur substantiates her historical data and her general observations. Within their discussion however there is little discussion of the causes of cultural

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[2] See Joshi, (2012) Introduction.

change among the Khasi, as such I have had to infer my account for humiliation occurring through the vector of education initiatives by early missionaries.

Vitebsky's work is the most detailed scholarship on the Sora, as well as the most relevant, as his nearly forty years of work documenting their culture and conversion to Christianity testify. Vitebsky's analytical style is subtle, but he references structuralist thinkers like Rappaport, Sahlins, and Robbins (Vitebsky forthcoming, 288, 296). In many ways my own analytical framework mirror's Vitebsky's, and within the sixth chapter I reference him a great deal, especially in his presentation of humiliation through linguistic isolation (ibid, 39). Where we differ is that I bring his account of the Sora into dialogue with the Khasi and Naga case studies to uncover which cultural factors led the latter two tribes to adapt their Christianities that are so far absent in the case of the Sora. Furthermore, I apply Baum's ideas to Vitebsky's observations on the current tensions in Sora Christianity and propose these as a potential sign of indigenisation among the Sora Christians.

1.5 Conclusion

Within this chapter I have given a broad overview of the focus of my investigation. Having taken the Khasi, Naga, and Sora as case studies for cultural change, I have outlined that I will focus on conversion and later processes of indigenisation among these three peoples. As I will develop in chapters three through six, indigenisation has been a cultural process for two of the Naga and Khasi, but has and may not, occur for the Sora. In both cases of indigenisation, transformation of Christianity to include older rejected practices transpired after an initial period of strict replication of Christian practices. This indigenisation was itself triggered by complex processes within each case study e.g. post-colonial identity politics, which will be developed in chapters three to six.

I have then presented an outline of chapters two through seven, which make up two chapters of methodology and analytical framework, three chapters of analysis and a final chapter concluding and summarising this thesis. I then outlined the definition of culture that informs my analytical framework, drawing on the ideas of Robbins (2004) and Sahlins (1987). Robbins outlines that he views culture as a

collection of values and categories and the relationships between them, forming a cultural structure (Robbins 2004, 30). Sahlins discusses the expanded view of culture in practice, and the risks taken by an actor to reproduce their culture (Sahlins 1987, xi). Sahlins notes that the environment of an actor will not always support reproduction, and that this can lead to humiliation (Sahlins 1987, xi), which will be developed in chapter three. Finally, I rounded out this chapter by briefly discussing the analytical approaches of all works I consulted in this study and where my analysis will differ.

Chapter Two–Methodology

2.1: Introduction

Having introduced the premise of this thesis, chapter two will focus on the methodology used. Kuper offers two challenges that are faced by any comparative approach, namely: How does a researcher isolate the unit of comparison (culture or society); and strictly speaking, are they comparable? (Kuper 2002, 145). These themes are the fundamental material of this chapter, and as such will structure the following sections. As the overarching frame of my comparison draws on the ideas of P.E. de Josselin de Jong (1980) and his idea of the field of ethnological study (FES), there will be some overlap. However, the first section will principally focus on the work of Sahlins (1968) in defining the term tribe, and Pfeffer's (2002) later expansion of these ideas in relation to tribes of the subcontinent. The second section will explain P.E. de Josselin de Jong's (1980) definition of region as the FES and its role in comparative studies like my own, and relate it to the comments of Fred Eggan (1954), Adam Kuper (2002), and Gopal Sarana (1997). The final section of this chapter will consist of relevant concluding remarks and act as a gateway to the next chapter.

2.2: On the Typology of Tribes

The term 'tribe' is perhaps one of the more difficult and baggage laden terms addressed in this thesis. The word itself has the tendency to make the post-colonial reflexive anthropologist cringe due to the shadow cast by empires of the not so distant past as Pfeffer (2002, 1) remarks. It is not the primary concern of this thesis to debate the usage of the term tribe, but it is necessary to devote some time discussing how the term is used within this thesis, and to what end.

Within India approximately 8.6% of the population has been designated as a tribe (Government of India 2011), or Scheduled Tribe (ST), and afforded a protected status by the government (Pfeffer 1997, 5). The designation of ST places people within that administrative category outside the north Indian caste system, and earmarks them for government subsidies and theoretically 'protection' of their way

of life from forces deemed harmful to their continued cultural preservation (ibid, 1-4). While many might see a number of ambiguities in this situation such as 'what is deemed traditional?' and 'what exactly is deemed harmful?' this thesis only looks at this administrative definition to acknowledge its existence, and the long standing confusion about its use as an analytical category (Pfeffer 2002, 2). The designation of ST only applies to a certain number of peoples, and is not defined by cultural boundaries, for example, in the Koraput region (administratively classified as a 'tribal' region) many peoples are considered ST, but there are others who do not meet this definition and are indistinguishable in terms of social structure and kinship from those who are so defined (Pfeffer 1997, 6). Pfeffer (2002) again highlights this inadequacy in *Debating the Tribe* where he notes many peoples designated as ST live alongside others who also fit an anthropological understanding of tribe, but not an administrative one (Pfeffer 2002, 1-2).

In light of the glaring deficiencies of using ST as a definition for this thesis, Pfeffer instead points out that a definition of a tribe needs to be more flexible to meet the demands of being an analytical category outside of administration (ibid, 2), as well as avoiding arguments based on levels of social development (ibid, 2-3). Pfeffer's comments in this light are in part meant to address the complexity of how a tribe can maintain its tribal society within a wider social system (ibid,12-13). His definition of what constitutes a tribe is the most viable option for this thesis, as I will detail below. First however I would like to address Sahlins' comments on tribe from his work in *Tribesmen* (Sahlins, 1968). Within this work we see the root of some of Pfeffer's important distinctions between different paradigms for viewing tribes, which he later expands upon and nuances. Pfeffer starts from Sahlins' definition and expands it to include important concepts like kinship systems maintaining categories of tribal identity over a large area (for example the Khasi, Naga and Sora) (Pfeffer 2002, 7), which are integral to this revision of the definition of tribe. Sahlins defines tribe as follows:

> As I understand the term, 'tribe' is like the 'nation' of older usage, a body of people of common derivation and custom, in possession and control of their own extensive territory. But if in some degree socially articulated, a tribe is specifically unlike a modern nation in that its several communities are not united under a sovereign governing authority, nor are the boundaries of the whole thus clearly and politically determined. (Sahlins 1968, vii-viii)

Pfeffer's additions in this regard are to nuance exactly what a lack of sovereign leadership is (Pfeffer 2002, 6)——for example amongst the Sora, there exists the system of village headman as an interface between a given Sora village and the state *Panchayat* (Vitebsky forthcoming, 125). But the headman, while he may act tyrannically in some situations (ibid, 116), is not a sovereign. The head man is not the unquestioned top of the Sora social hierarchy——he is simply a political office to bring the totality of Sora society (in relation to affinity and descent) under the nation state of India (Pfeffer 2002, 12; Vitebsky forthcoming, 116). Sahlins continues by saying:

> The Tribe is also uncomplicated in other ways. Its economics, its politics, its religion are not conducted by different institutions specially designed for the purpose but coincidently by the same kinship and local groups: the lineage and clan segments of the tribe, the households and villages, which thus appear as versatile organisations in charge of the entire social life. (Sahlins 1968, viii)

Sahlins further states:

> The tribe builds itself up from within, the smaller community segments joined in groups of higher order, yet just where it becomes greatest the structure becomes weakest: the tribe as such is the most tenuous of arrangements, without even a semblance of collective organization. (Sahlins 1968, viii)

Sahlins here mentions kinship as a structure for replacing institutions——but kinship goes beyond that, and from a certain perspective, it underpins why a tribe is a total society and not a partial one like peasants, for example (Pfeffer 2002, 3). Here, Sahlins presents a sufficiently detailed structural definition of tribes at the time it was made, but in relation to the peoples within this thesis it is not sufficiently nuanced. Pfeffer therefore seeks to update Sahlins' explanation of the concept of tribe and poses a model that is even more flexible and adequately addresses the complexities of the kinds of cases presented within this thesis.

Pfeffer, in accord with Sahlins discusses the nature of tribal autonomy and the lack of sovereign leadership (ibid, 6). There are no tribal kings, and while there may be the imposition of political officers (Vitebsky forthcoming, 116), tribal roles

are distributed between tribe members (Pfeffer 2002, 12). This is because one of the key defining features of Pfeffer's tribe is that of its patterns of affinity and descent, which in turn generally denotes who takes which roles (ibid, 7). Arguably this is what maintains a tribe's autonomy and its complete nature[3] while being within a nation state (ibid, 6-7), as its collective identity and the roles and relationships therein are structured by clan categories and marriage ties (ibid, 7). Whether the line of descent is patrilineal or matrilineal, how descent is patterned across a tribe will be remarkably consistent within its clan categories over a large area such as the 1.9 million Naga (Joshi 2012, 17; Pfeffer 2002, 7).

All three tribes in this study maintain their structures of affinity and descent across large states like Nagaland, or Meghalaya, and Bangladesh in the case of the Khasi, or two Indian states in the case of the Sora, which remain intact today. The totality of identity and social structure that is expressed in kinship is what allows a tribe to convert to another religion, to become urbanised, to become educated (or not), and still be a member of the tribe. To illustrate this last point Pfeffer quotes N.R. Singh's 1973 study of the Meitei tribe of north eastern Manipur:

> Since the early 18th century they adopted Hinduism and worshipped the Hindu deities along with their clan, lineage, and forest gods to this day. Otherwise, however, they remained Meitei, whether they were potters or barbers, goldsmiths, administrators, or university professors. They were unable to invent castes and internal segregation. Their superior status within tribal Manipur continued as in pre-Hindu times (cited in Pfeffer 2002, 10)

The Khasi, Naga, and Sora all have maintained their sense of tribal membership in lieu of converting to Christianity, something that missionaries never saw necessary or were unsuccessful in altering.

Continuing in the vein of autonomy and totality of tribal society, Pfeffer references the concept of *warre* (Pfeffer 2002, 11). Where a nation state might guarantee a minimum of non-violent solutions to internal conflicts, tribes share no

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[3] To best understand Pfeffer's conception of how a tribe is complete he contrasts peasant societies with tribes as such: "Peasants, in other words, form the partial society, or rather the basic layer, of an encompassing, complex, administrative system, be it patrimonial or legalistic, while tribes are not administered at all. Peasants follow fixed boundaries and demands of the external authorities; tribes try to ignore anything of the sort." (2002, 11).

such compunction (ibid, 11). Violence within families, the village, or lineage may occur or cease on the whims of its instigators (ibid, 11). Pfeffer surmises the tribe's relationship with conflict as follows:

> Tribesmen, by contrast, have always put up a fight. In India and elsewhere, most tribes are known to be peaceful and only a few are considered to be belligerent as such, but all fight when attacked, all register frequent homicides, all cling to their land and their animals. None would, like the Chewong, simply run away when an outsider raises an eyebrow or an insider is assumed to carry a different opinion. (Pfeffer 2002, 12)

Both the Naga and the Khasi maintained a degree of armed resistance to colonial forces (Joshi 2012, 20; Natarajan 1977, 58). In the case of the Naga, this conflict continued not only between independence factions within the Naga (see chapter four), but also with the Indian State Army (Joshi 2012, 118). In the case of the Khasi, they collectively maintained a war against the Raj for three years (Natarajan 1977, 58). Furthermore, they started a cultural preservation movement as a response to imposition by colonial administration (Mathur 1979, 89). All three tribes discussed in this thesis have clearly displayed a lack of aversion to violence. Indeed, one recent case study has shown that the Naga still maintain armed conflict with the Indian state army to some extent (Joshi 2012, 118).

To summarise, I have used Pfeffer's framework of defining the tribe to frame the Khasi, Naga, and Sora. Firstly, I have utilised Pfeffer's categories of tribes being total societies unto themselves due to patterns of affinity and descent, even when encompassed by nation states (Pfeffer 2002, 6). I have then applied his concept of kinship as the dominant cohesive pattern amongst tribal societies (ibid, 7), and its connections with the lack of singular tribal leadership (ibid, 3). Kinship is also important in defining my use of Naga, Khasi, and Sora as a category for describing large groups of people who form a totality (ibid, 8), and while each of these tribes is generally peaceful, their individual members are not averse to violent internal and external conflicts (ibid, 11). It is on these grounds that I group the Naga, Khasi, and Sora as a unit of comparison—in answer to Kuper's first question posed in this chapter's introduction. Finally, the framework of classification I have outlined has also based on the concept of tribe, also contributes to my justification of why my case studies can are similar enough to offer fruitful comparison as I will detail below.

2.3: Region and Comparison

J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong defined the concept of the field of ethnological study in order to give shape to the growing body of regional comparisons within his work in Indonesia. This was later refined by his nephew P.E. de Josselin de Jong (1980). The field of ethnological study (FAS) in many respects is inextricably connected with both the typology of the unit of comparison (in this case tribe) and the contextualisation of a comparison, which Kuper (2002) discusses. This section will start by outlining P.E. de Josslin de Jong's conception behind the FAS and will then relate it to both Kuper's (2002) and Sarana's (1997) comments on the comparative method. It will also refer back to the previous section, before concluding and laying a foundation for the next chapter. Furthermore, the broad reading I give here of the FES, is a means to frame a regional comparison which is conscious of the differences and similarities between the three tribes.

The FES as P.E. de Josselin de Jong outlines it, is a pragmatic and flexible solution to some of the challenges that come with a comparative approach and defining a regional comparison. Principally it addresses Kuper's (2002, 145) question posed in the introduction, as well as assisting in defining the physical area of a comparison and what is to be gained from this approach. In this sense an analogous term would be an area of regional comparison. P. E. de Josselin de Jong quotes J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong in this regard:

> He defined 'fields of ethnological study' as 'certain areas of the earth's surface with a population whose culture appears to be sufficiently homogeneous and unique to form a separate object of ethnological study, and which at the same time apparently reveals sufficient local shades of difference to make internal comparative approaches worthwhile.' (J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong in P.E. de Josselin de Jong, 1980, 318)

Before delving into the topic of mutual comprehensibility, it is necessary to devote some words to how I conceptualise region within my FES. It would be too simplistic to simply designate the entire subcontinent as a justifiable region, and while Khasi and Naga are clear members of the north eastern Indian cultural region the Sora hail from eastern central India. Including these three societies then requires more detailed consideration of their shared cultural past, which manifests in three distinct

ways. The first and second[4] are both outlined by Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf (1950), these pertain to the practice of 'youth dormitories' (Fürer-Haimendorf 1950, 119) and megalithic rituals (ibid, 120). Youth dormitories are a wide spread cultural phenomena among the tribal peoples of India both in the north east and central India, and while possessing a multitude of names, all more or less follow similar paters of being a communal house for single men with the similar institutions for women (ibid, 120).

These houses serve as a means to mark the transition from adolescence to manhood among men, and enculturate them to the systems of obligations as an adult male, something vitally important in structuring tribal society (ibid, 120). One such example of obligation that Fürer-Haimendorf gives, is that youth dormitories were instrumental in organising a tribes' war party amongst the Ao Naga (ibid, 121). Another point of commonality is that of megalithic rituals, while I can scarcely detail these much due to space, it is that another shared future of cultural history between the north east and central India is associated with the erection of megalithic structures and rituals surrounding them such as buffalo sacrifice (ibid, 121, 136). Vitebsky notes that among the Sora, the planting of menhirs to mark funeral rites was wide spread until Christianity became the predominant religion. Mathur notes a similar phenomenon, and that by the 1960s during his fieldwork even non-Christian Khasi had ceased to plant megaliths (Mathur 1979, 18) In addition, Fürer-Haimendorf notes this also occurred among the Naga, he however notes it more in relation to the similarities of buffalo sacrifice that were also practiced among the Sora and Khasi pre conversion (Fürer-Haimendorf 1950, 127).

As a final point of similarity linking these three peoples, they were all subject to India's colonial past. This itself actually becomes a central theme in my analysis of the Khasi and Naga, as post-colonial identity became a significant feature in both case studies. With these three factors in mind I feel that the shared cultural history, makes for a strong case of including the Khasi, Sora, and Naga as a cultural region within my frame of an FES.

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[4] For a more detailed discussion on youth dormitories and megalithic rituals see Fürer-Haimendorf, 1950.

Returning to P. E. de Joselin de Jong (1980, 318), he emphasizes that for an FES to be a valid methodological scenario, the comparison of case studies must be a mutually interpretive scenario. In simple terms this means that the process of comparing cultures within an FES renders each of them far more comprihensible and open to analytical understanding (ibid, 318). Due to his relationship with the Leiden school, Kuper's thoughts on conducting a comparison are similar: "An alternative way of thinking about comparison is as the business of contextualizing information in order to address a question." (Kuper 2002, 161).

The concept of mutual comprehensibility motivated me to apply the method of an FES to the three case studies within this thesis. As discussed in section 2.2, the Khasi, Sora, and Naga are viewed in terms of exhibiting many criteria of the concept of a tribe. With this similarity in social structure, *warre*, and given that all three tribes have become majority Christian populations on these typological grounds I argue that these tribes are sound examples to compare. Moreover the phenomena of indigenisation and how it does and does not arise, truly only becomes clear by comparison.

In both the Khasi and the Naga there have been clear moves to indigenise their Christianity, but in both cases the motivating factors for their indiginisation were different (Joshi 2002, 118; Mathur 1979, 141). In comparison, the Sora have not yet undergone indigenisation of their Christianity. This may never happen if their scenario continues to lack the motivating factors of social or political conflict as in the cases of the Khasi and Naga respectivley (Joshi 2012, 118; Mathur 1979, 141). These may not be the only issues that motivate indigenisation, but what is clear throughout this thesis is that without a contextualised comparison (as presented by the FES method) the trend would not be so clear. Additionally, applying the FES method also allows for a sensitive appraisal of the individual cases and the differences that have influenced their circumstances. This is particularly important so as not to fall into the trap of "butterfly collecting" as Edmund Leach critiqued (Leach in Sarana 1997, 119), that is, selecting perfect specimens. Indeed, the strength of the FES is that the comparison weighs both similarity and difference (P.E. de Josselin de Jong 1980, 318-319).

I believe this is precisely what P.E. de Josselin de Jong is discussing when he uses the term 'mutually interpretive' i.e. that the act of comparison under an FES reveals not only the main thrust of a question or problem, but also the variations in how this came to arise in different case studies. In this sense when Sarana defines a descriptive analytical typology as being inherently synchronic and contextualised (Sarana 1997, 119), his definition conforms to the proposed approach in an FES. If we continue to consider Sarana's breakdown of common aspects of a comparative study, the FES is both a regional comparison (ibid, 119) with a broad and flexible mandate, as well as an overarching framework for typology building and contextualisation (Kuper 2002, 145; Sarana 1997, 119).

Having discussed how I frame my comparative approach around the FES with emphasis on a synchronic and contextualised approach (Kuper 2002, 145; Sarana 1997, 119), it is now necessary to outline specifically what I will be comparing. As I have outlined in my introductory chapter, I approached culture from the same standpoint as Robbins in that culture is a collection of values and categories and the relationships between them (Robbins 2004, 6). As Eggan outlines here:

> Generalization requires repeatable units, which can be identified, and social structures, which tend to have a limited number of forms, readily lend themselves to classification and comparison. (Eggan 1954, 746)

Eggan further clarifies:

> My own preference is for the utilization of the comparative method on a smaller scale and with as much control over the frame of comparison as it is possible to secure. (Eggan 1954, 747)

In keeping with my definition of culture, the specific structures of comparison (ibid, 747) are the cultural categories that have undergone radical cultural change through processes of 'humiliation' and in some cases culminating in 're-humiliation'[5] (Sahlins 2005, 29). This I term indigenisation following Baum (1990, 245), where converts

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[5] For a more detailed explanation of humiliation and re-humiliation please see Section 3.3.

transform aspects of their Christianity to include traditional cultural elements, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

In summary, I have opted for a regional comparison as defined in P.E. de Josselin de Jong's (1980, 318) concept of an FES. I have defined my field as the complementary areas of the Naga, Khasi, and Sora within the Indian subcontinent (ibid, 318) due to their comparable tribal social structures, mutual comprehensibility and adoption of Christianity (ibid, 319). As Eggan (1954, 746) suggests, the comparable structures have been outlined as the cultural categories pertaining to the indigenisation of Christianity. The concept of mutual comprehensibility also serves to properly contextualise my comparison as Kuper (2002, 145) recommends in a comparative study, as it places emphasis on recognising those features of the case studies that are comparable and those that are not (P.E. de Josslin de Jong 1980, 319). For example, without acknowledging the relationship that the Khasi and Naga had with colonialism, versus the comparative lack of impact it had among the Sora, has helped reveal how identity for the Naqa and Khasi became a point for re-humiliation and indigenisation of Christianity. In focusing on these similarities and differences in my analysis I not only render the comparison more comprehensible, but also contextualisemy investigation.

2.4: Conclusion

Returning to Kuper's two challenges toward a comparative approach: how does a researcher isolate the unit of comparison (culture or society) and, strictly speaking are they comparable? I have utilised Pfeffer's (2002) theorisation of tribe to frame the Naga, Khasi, and Sora as comparable societies on the grounds of their similar patterns of kinship, social custom, and structure. As these three societies represent totalities in many respects, I have also reasoned that they form units that can be reasonably compared under my framework of regional comparison. P.E. de Joselin de Jong's framework of an FES also requires that cultures be similar enough to offer coherent and comparable results, but different enough that comparison will offer fruitful results. P.E. de Josselin de Jong (1980, 319) terms this as 'mutual comprehensibility', and this is crucial to the conclusions I draw in this thesis, as the

situations leading to the Khasi and Naga indigenising their Christianity are radically different to the Sora. In comparing these three cases it becomes clear as to why the Khasi and Naga undertook the process of indigenising their Christianity and the Sora have not done so as yet. A more developed account of how I will analyse these cultural categories will be given in the next chapter.

Chapter Three–Anthropology, Conversion, and Indigenisation

3.1: Introduction

This chapter will outline the analytical framework that I employ in the next three chapters. The heart of my analysis comes from Robbins' reading of Sahlins' extensive body of work on cultural change, which revolves around the idea that all cultures[6] are a system of categories and values (Robbins 2004). Sahlins' theory starts with the idea that an event (See section 1.3) can be a crucible for initiating cultural change (Sahlins 1987, xi) or for the restructuring or expansion of those values and categories (Sahlins 1987, xi). I will briefly outline Sahlins' idea of such an event, its being interpreted within a cultural framework, and how this can then lead to cultural change. I will then employ Joel Robbins' summaries and modifications of Sahlins' general theories of cultural change, as they are a more manageable rendering of many years of Sahlins' work. I will first sketch out Robbins' three models of cultural change (Robbins 2004) and how they relate to my analysis. I will then discuss Sahlins' notion of humiliation as an impetus for cultural change (Sahlins 2005), as well as discussing Robbins' expansion of the concept humiliation (Robbins 2016). I will discuss humiliation after outlining the models of cultural change as it is a regular feature within the development of both Khasi and Naga Christianity.[7]

Finally, after discussing humiliation, I will detail Sahlins' idea of the active reception and incorporation of new cultural forms, which he mainly discusses in terms of commodities (Sahlins 1999, 2005). I will expand this notion with my revised concept of re-humiliation, or the process where the Naga and Khasi re-evaluated and revised their Christianity to include ideas and practices they had rejected during adoption. I use Baum's (1990) five models of reconciling the tension of conversion

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[6] See chapter one for my explanation of how culture is viewed in this thesis.

[7] As mentioned in chapter One, I see a similar pattern of the development of indigenisation among the Naga and Khasi, the Sora are still at the level of adoption in many respects (see chapter six) so it is too early to see if they fit this pattern.

(or within the cultural milieu), to formulate my understanding of the indigenisation of Christianity that has been informed by these three models.

3.2: Three Models of Cultural Change

In this section I detail Robbins' three models of cultural change from his work *Becoming Sinners* (Robbins, 2004). These models are drawn from the work Sahlins developed across many publications, the first detailed example being *Islands of History* (Sahlins, 1987). These models form ways of analysing how cultures address the challenge of the arrival of a new culture and the potential disjuncture it creates.[8] The first of these three models Robbins isolates he terms assimilation. Assimilation occurs when cultural categories are challenged either by actors within a culture (Robbins 2004, 10) or an event challenges a cultural category. To illustrate this with an example from Sahlins' work: when Captain Cook arrived in Hawaii, it was interpreted by the Hawaiians as the arrival of their god Lono (Sahlins 1987, 136). Here the unexpected phenomenon of Cook arriving at the time of an annual ritual concerning Lono led the Hawaiians to encompass the event in their own cultural categories by seeing Cook as their god Lono, who was according to their cultural structure, due to arrive around that time of year. In this example we see the unexpected arrival of Europeans assimilated into an existing category, or as Robbins states:

> When it [the structure of conjuncture] serves as a paradigm in this way, its most notable feature is the tight locking of old category and new element that allowed the Hawaiians to construe the new (Cook and his movements) fairly exhaustively in terms of the old (Lono and his rites). (Robbins 2004, 8)

Within this thesis assimilation is not a key analytical feature, however, I present it here for the sake of a complete presentation of Robbins' models. The key point here is that when faced with a challenge to the current cultural norm, a peoples' response is to simply place the challenging feature within the existing category (a minor

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[8] This refers to the 'structure of conjuncture' mentioned in introduction 1.3, for further reading see Sahlins (1987) Introduction.

adjustment), thus reasserting its importance (ibid, 8). Robbins acknowledges this is a form of change in itself (Robbins 2016, 44), which stems from one of Sahlins' most enduring ideas, in that change including the reproduction of cultural categories is precisely what communities who possess culture need to have a sense of tradition (Robbins 2004, 4-5).

The second of Robbins' models he titles transformation, which is when a cultural category or category meets the challenge of the structure of conjuncture by expanding its contents or rearranging its relationship with other categories (Robbins 2004, 10). Again, this can be illustrated with an example from Sahlins' work on Captain Cook, regarding the discussion of taboo[9] (or *tapu*). In the wake of Captain Cook's arrival among the Hawaiian people this important concept radically changed, in this example by a rearrangement of relations:

> The Hawaiian abrogation of taboo was not simply a matter of change in their understanding of taboo or of any other single category. Instead, it was the outcome of changes in the *relations* that linked the categories 'men,' 'women,' 'chiefs,' and 'commoners,' to one another. (Robbins 2004, 8)

This Sahlins refers to as a 'structural transformation' (Sahlins 1987 143, 138). The presentation of taboo here does not do justice to how flexible adaptation is as a model (See footnote one). To use an example from my own research, among the Naga, Christianity had been adopted by a significant portion of their population during the 1950s (Eaton 1997, 246). The initial interpretation of all Naga practices by Baptist missionaries, such as healing and dance, were seen as negative elements, or pagan, and therefore were to be rejected (Joshi 2012, 18). Early Naga Christians, in turn setting high standards for church membership, adopted this strict interpretation including suppression of dance and music. This however changed with the arrival of the revival movement that had arisen amongst Christians in nearby Mizoram.[10] The revival movement brought a new appreciation for emotive

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[9] For a more detailed example of how taboo/*tapu* changes amongst the Hawaiian people see Sahlins *Islands of History* chapter five (Sahlins, 1987).

[10] The revival movement brought with it the charismatic and emotional church services of the Pentecostal revival movement, which included faith healings. This, I argue, also paved the way for

and charismatic church ceremonies, and stemming from its Pentecostal origins, the idea of the power of spiritual healing (ibid, 225). With the tumultuous backdrop of the independence conflict and rising social tensions causing events that required a response by the Naga, categories of healing through the Christian spirit were given more and more prominence (ibid, 247). This I argue led to the later inclusion of practices that resembled traditional Naga 'pagan'[11] practices being accepted under the wider umbrella category of healing (Joshi 2012, 193).

This is a very clear example of Sahlins' concept of 'structural transformation' (Sahlins 1987, 143, 138) whereby the category surrounding healing practices amongst Christian Naga initially did not include ideas of spiritual healing. It was later expanded to include notions of the Christian healing spirit and faith healing (Joshi 2012, 247), and further expanded to allow for the inclusion of some practices associated with *Themu Mia*[12] (ibid, 129). After that the category of healing was still considered a distinct and traditional part of Naga Christianity (Joshi 2012, 223) but the change and expansion due to events and actors was also clear. This can also be seen in terms of Robbins notions that while categories change, in terms of the perception of individual members of a society, their ideas and practices maintain an enduring sense of continuity or tradition (Robbins 2004, 5).

The third category is that of adoption, which is the model that many would associate with that of the process of conversion. This process is where a community or person abandons any efforts to reproduce their culture to a greater or lesser extent and replaces the categories that are associated with this in favour of new ones (Robbins 2004, 9). Robbins notes that in its most basic sense for Sahlins this means a process of 'modernisation' (Robbins 2004, 9) but in situations of radical

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traditional Naga healing practices being incorporated into their Christian healing practices. This will be expanded upon in the next chapter.

[11] In the case of the Naga there is not one term for pre-Christian religion across all Naga, I chose to adopt the term Joshi uses when referring to the non-Christian or Hindu Naga as a whole i.e. 'pagan' (Joshi 2012, 10). In this sense the term means adherents of non-Abrahamic or Dharmic religions rather than the derogatory sense employed by Christians that Vitebsky refers to in relation to his definition of animism (see chapter six).

[12] *Themu Mia* essentially translates as divination healer, who predicts what ails an individual and what will cure them (Joshi 2012, 124). For a lengthier explanation see Joshi 2012 chapter 4.

change such as conversion often humiliation (see below) is at play (ibid, 9). Humiliation is a process of cultural debasement where the challenge presented by a new event or encounter is so stark that individuals decide to reject some or many of their categories in favour of adopting new ones (ibid, 9). This is the basis for what Robbins refers to as 'radical cultural change' (ibid, 9), and will be most familiar to the reader in terms of conversion to a religion, and in the case of this thesis Christianity. The Naga, Sora, and Khasi all chose to adopt the worldview of Christianity due to humiliation in various forms. This represents the first comparative point in the trend I observe within this thesis, and during the period following humiliation, the trend is for a strict or orthodox adoption of the Christian worldview presented, along with its associated categories and values.

3.3: Humiliation and the Active Role a Culture Takes in the Process of Cultural Change

As mentioned above, humiliation is viewed by Sahlins as the tipping point for what drives a people to abandon reproducing their culture or adapting it (Robbins 2004, 8-9) to suit the challenge of cultural disjuncture (or an event). Put simply humiliation here is a compact term that alludes to the complex nature of cultural motivations for cultural change (Robbins 2005, 2) Of this Sahlins says that:

> To 'modernize,' the people must first learn to hate what they already have, what they have always considered their well-being. Beyond that, they have to despise what they are, to hold their own existence in contempt——and want, then, to be someone else. (Sahlins 2005, 38)

In short people have to be confronted with situations in which their cultural categories, values and practices at least in their current form, do not adequately deal with the situation they find themselves in. But Sahlins claims it is more than just a functional rupture of a category:

> They already have their own cultures, their own ideas of the good. So the question is not simply what forces them to be like us, but why should they want to? (Sahlins 2005, 38)

So it is not just enough to find that a cultural category does not work, adoption requires the conscious decision 'this no longer works for me, and that cultural system is better'. Therefore, it is an active desire on the part of a people to feel that their culture is no longer valuable to them.

> In addition to the coercion and destruction unleashed by global capitalism, we should not underestimate the complementary means of cultural debasement such as the propagation of Christianity. The American missionaries used to complain endlessly that the problem with the Hawaiians was that they lacked sufficient self-contempt... They were 'ignorant' of the baseness and depravity of their nature and the worthlessness of this world... Only then when sufficiently disgusted with themselves, would they be prepared to become like us——'civilized' (Sahlins 2005, 38)

These statements could be interpreted as suggesting that new cultural categories are transmitted from one culture and received passively by another. Sahlins however later asserts that a people are active in their reception of new cultural categories (ibid, 19). Robbins offers a solution to this as an addition to Sahlins' own theory:

> In order for people to grasp their humiliation in terms of discourses and images that come to them from outside of their own cultural frames, as these explanations suggest that they do, they would already have had to embrace those discourses and images in the very terms those discourses and images lay down: that is, they would already have had to experience significant cultural change. To see oneself as a sinner, one already has to know important parts of Christian doctrine, and to see oneself as undeveloped one already has to have a coherent (even if not accurate) sense of the benefits development can bring. (Robbins 2016, 56)

Robbins further nuances this however, by giving importance to the cultural dimension within which a people work to understand their own humiliation. This is an important addition, as an event in Robbins summary is understood as an event due to a culture's structure ordering the perception of history (Robbins 2016, 44). However, this is not something Sahlins underlines in his model of adoption. Why Sahlins does not make this connection explicit is not clear; Robbins however adds this in his interpretation:

> If we are to preserve humiliation as a *cultural* cause of cultural change, then, we need to modify our account by arguing that people first understand their humiliation in standing (or 'traditional') cultural terms, and that it is this traditionally framed experience of humiliation that leads them to actively engage humiliating foreign discourses that both

deepen their sense of dissatisfaction and provide ideational materials for cultural reconstructions designed to overcome it. (Robbins 2016, 56)

This actually answers Sahlins' rhetorical question: "what would make a people want to be like another people." (Sahlins 2005, 38). People will engage with an incident or event that results in humiliation due to a category or number of categories within their culture's structure no longer making sense (or failing). This understanding of both event and humiliation are formulated in terms of a peoples' traditional culture to begin with, and then by adopting the new cultural categories the cause of a culture's humiliation is compounded and reinforced. To use an example from the Sora, in their traditional culture shamans operated as the medium between the living and the dead, and derived their social power and position from being married to *kshatriya*[13] administrators in the underworld (Vitebsky forthcoming, 33). These *kshatriya* administrator spirits derived their power from literacy and keeping written records of those who had caused social issues (ibid, 33). This relationship also mirrored the difficult relationship the Sora possessed with the Hindu administrators at the time of Vitebsky's research fieldwork research in the 1970's, predominately due to the administrators' power of literacy (ibid, 33). Vitebsky's description of literacy for the Sora is reminiscent of awe and reverential attitudes towards the written word;[14] literacy was power in the Soras' world, and Christianity with its education and literacy initiatives provided a means to escape a culturally humiliating linguistic monopoly (ibid, 33) (see chapter seven). The Christian religion possessed literacy, and in educating the Sora in the power of the written word, it marginalised the power of the shaman. Through education and exposure to literature promoting the superiority of the Christian message, the majority of Sora came to devalue their animist[15] worldview. Robbins notes that in a situation of conversion to Christianity

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[13] *Kshatriya's* are Hindu caste bureaucrats, soldiers and policemen. The social power Sora shaman's derived came from their social position and their literacy (Vitebsky forthcoming, 33). See chapter six page 63 for more detail.

[14] This is further confirmed in his follow up fieldwork in the 1990s where he comes to know of a local religious cult that venerates the written word. For a more detailed discussion, see forthcoming chapter eleven.

[15] I have adopted Vitebsky's use of the term animism, which he describes as follows: "I use 'animism' not as a primitivist category or something residual when 'world religions' are subtracted, but as a serious descriptive term. The 'ism' is an unfortunate by-product of European language; but animist

this can and does lead to fresh new humiliations that further make a case for a new religion (2016, 57), however, it can also work to the contrary as I have alluded to and will discuss in more detail in the case of the Naga and Khasi. I will expand this category and add my own modified term 're-humiliation', which is more of a descriptor than a hard category. This is used to represent the new humiliations that occur in the case studies of the Khasi and the Naga, where due to various factors stemming from post-colonialism in the case of both people, and an oppositional cultural preservation movement in the case of the Khasi, traditional practices and ideas have been re-evaluated and transformed to fit within Christianity. For example, among the Naga due to the backdrop of the independence struggle including a stress on a coherent Naga identity, elements of Naga dance and song were reintroduced into Naga Christianity (Joshi 2012, 189). Over time this also came to include older ideas of healing practices from traditional Naga 'spirit healing' being practiced alongside Christian faith healing, which can be seen as a response to social rifts (or hurt) amongst the Naga community in light of the independence struggle (ibid, 240). This concept of re-humiliation I view in terms of Baum's models of indigenisation, which I outline below, as a response by a convert or converts to release the tension within their worldview of contradictory ideas or categories (Baum 1990, 375). As a final caveat I should add that humiliation does not have to come purely in the form of religion, humiliation can be triggered by any sense of cultural failing provided that actors interpret the source of humiliation as significant. Religion could, given the right structure of conjuncture, become an impetus for humiliation. Be it economic, political or social, there are many discourses in the world that can lead to people interpreting their culture in humiliating terms (Robbins 2016, 55).

Sora cosmology certainly has axioms and logically coherent chains of reasoning, and I have tried to infer these from Sora actions and discourses. If animism is defined by the idea that different phenomena have a similar human-like interiority even while their outward physical forms differ, then the Sora view of sonums is certainly animist." (Vitebsky forthcoming, 287). Vitebsky's description of *sonum* is a little vague—he states that spirit could be used (ibid, 14), but that the topic is more nuanced. For the purposes of this thesis I have used spirit and *sonum* interchangeably. For a more nuanced reading see Vitebsky (forthcoming) and Vitebsky (1993).

As should be clear, Sahlins' theory (and Robbins' additions) emphasizes the active participation a people take in the process of cultural change. Sahlins discusses this in terms of a people rendering those things European[16] intelligible in their culture's forms (Sahlins 2005, 27). Sahlins speaks of this as indigenisation and even goes so far as suggesting that "If anthropologists have not always recognized this indigenisation of Western objects, it is probably because they were taken in by their own terminology" (ibid, 27). I will now use this as a bridge to insert Baum's five models of response that an individual takes to reconcile the tensions in transitioning from one religion to another. Baum outlines five models that straddle both models for change that I have applied to the case studies in this thesis.

The broad patterns of response are as follows: 1) The sudden and radical conversion whereby an individual's old worldview is totally disregarded for the new, leading to "a radical shift of one's life orientation" (Baum 1990, 375), a case Baum comments is exceedingly rare; 2) Where a convert embraces their new religious worldview, as well as the religion's leadership and their interpretations of religious texts. Baum comments that this is common amongst illiterate peoples or peoples who do not have access to theological texts for exegesis (ibid, 375); 3) The convert resolves tensions in their worldview by bringing the spiritual and moral concerns of their old religion, into their new religion. This Baum calls indigenisation (ibid, 376); 4) Baum terms this model the syncretic pattern, where a convert maintains allegiance to both worldviews, developing the understanding that both religions have their areas of expertise and error (ibid, 376); 5) The convert after deliberation, ultimately decides to reject the new worldview *in toto* and to return to their previous worldview.

In many ways Baum's analytical model is very similar to Sahlins' own understanding, in that his notion of indigenisation echoes the second category of cultural adaptation. I put Baum's models forward to explicitly link the adaptation of cultural categories by a people, to the indigenisation of Christianity, which I have

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[16] While Sahlins speaks in terms of commodities, but he alludes this process of rendering other cultural forms (Christianity for example) intelligible within the local cultural context, which is inherent in his premise of the active role a culture takes in its change (2005, 27).

termed re-humiliation earlier in this section. While I present Robbins' three possible models as the macro level of understanding indigenisation, Baum's model I link to the individual level of indigenisation as it offers a descriptive analytical tool to address phenomena such as post-colonial identity and independence politics—phenomena that are central to the two clear cases of indigenisation among the Khasi and Naga case studies. As I will discuss in the coming chapters, I have combined these analytical frameworks to make better sense of the trends identified in my case studies.

3.4: Conclusion

Following on from my methodological framework, I have outlined how I will analyse the process of cultural change in the coming chapters of this thesis. Starting with Robbins' three models of cultural change, I have detailed that the first is the model of assimilation, where a people expand one or more cultural categories to absorb a new category, and it is seamlessly blended within the existing framework (Robbins 2004, 10). This will not feature within the analysis of this thesis, however model two (transformation) and model three (adoption) will be discussed at length. Model two is that of transformation, where an existing cultural framework is either rearranged to give new importance to existing ideas, or a category is adapted to include new values and practices (ibid, 10)—this I will use for the process of indigenisation in later discussions. The third model is that of adoption, where a people will give up their cultural framework *in toto* to adopt a new one (ibid, 10). This I have highlighted is present in all three case studies as a first step in the development of indigenised Christianity—and at least in Sahlins' terms, follows that of cultural humiliation (Sahlins 2005, 39), where on a peoples own terms (through their existing cultural structure) they come to be disenchanted with their own cultural system and seek to adopt a new one, or at the very least adapt their current system (Sahlins 2005, 39).

With these overarching analytical frameworks set in place, I then discussed Baum's five models of conversion (1990). I have mentioned that I will focus on model three, where the convert resolves this challenge by bringing the spiritual and moral concerns of their old religion, into their new religion (1990, 375). This I have

linked to Robbins' summary of Sahlins' third model of cultural change (Robbins 2004, 10) as adaptation, and as I will argue in the case of the Khasi and the Naga, this has occurred due to their reaction to complex social and political processes in their environment. To describe this, I have adapted one of Sahlins' term humiliation to coin another——re-humiliation——to represent a people's motivations for indigenisation of their Christianity by re-evaluating and transforming traditional categories and inserting them into their Christianity. I understand these in light of Baum's ideas where indigenisation is a means for a people to make sense of conflicting ideas within their worldview (Baum 1990, 376), and as I will discuss in my case studies, it often appears as a reaction to the issues at play within the political or social context of each tribe. In so doing, I will locate my comparison within the context of each case study in order to explore the process of indigenisation of Christianity as it is for the Naga, Khasi, and Sora.

Chapter Four–The Naga: Indigenisation and Healing in response to Post-Colonialism

4.1: Introduction to the Naga

The Naga are comprised of sixteen different sub-tribes who all claim separate ethnic status, but within a wider Naga totality (Joshi 2012, 17), including the Ao Naga, Lotha Naga, and Angami Naga amongst others[17] (Government of Nagaland 2014). Current statistical information estimates a population of three million Naga (Thong 2010, 596), which suggests that it is likely that some Naga people spill over the state borders into Meghalaya, Assam, and even Myanmar (Thong 2010, 597). This chapter deals with the Naga of Nagaland a state located in the northeast of the Indian subcontinent, resting against Myanmar to its east and Assam to its north and west. According to the 2011 Indian census Nagaland held 0.16% of India's population with 1.9 million people, boasting a 95% Christian majority (Government of India 2011).

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[17] For a complete list of tribes please consult the Nagaland government homepage (Government of Nagaland 2014).

In the 1830s colonial forces pushed out from Assam in the hope of finding suitable land for tea plantations in the "wasteland" of jungle (Joshi 2012, 19). Finding that the Naga lived within these areas and were resistant to colonial intruders, between 1832 and 1851 the military made ten expeditions into Nagaland. This finally resulted in the battle of Kohima on the 11th of February 1851 and the establishment of the British headquarters at Samaguting in Nagaland (Thong 2010, 577; Joshi 2012, 22). This particular chapter of colonial history is written in the lives of many Naga people, with over 300 dying in the final conflict to annex the territory (Thong 2010, 597).

The determined opposition to both the British colonials and the Indian state by the Naga as a whole underpins the unique process of indigenisation that is documented in this case study.[19] As I will discuss in the following section, Christianity arrived relatively early amongst the Naga and those who did adopt the new religion were stigmatised by their fellow tribespeople, and were subject to a growing emphasis on strict adoption by their fellow Christians. With the arrival of the revival movement from neighbouring states, and ongoing conflict with the Indian state over independence, the Naga underwent a wide adoption of Christianity as new forms of Christianity emerged in response to wider social issues.

In this chapter the first section will discuss the arrival of Christianity and instances of cultural humiliation in light of Sahlins' and Robbins' framework. In the next section I will discuss the arrival of the revival movement from Mizoram (Joshi 2012, 197) and the independence struggle and its symbiotic relationship with the growth and indigenisation of Christianity amongst the Naga (ibid, 189). In the final section I will discuss how these factors culminated in the current prominence of

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[18] Accessed February 9th 2017,
https://www.google.nl/maps/place/Nagaland,+India/@26.1127588,92.0442716,7z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x3746210934c63d31:0x1f2df33a89cc3efd!8m2!3d26.1584354!4d94.5624426.

[19] After 1851 the British no longer sent military expeditions into the Naga Hills due to high costs in both life and resources, however they continued to face resistance from the Naga people who were not under their direct control, culminating in the 1879 Kohima rebellion (Joshi 2012, 23). This led to roughly 30 years of further conflict, with the colonial forces eventually triumphing through heavy handed tactics in 1910 (Joshi 2012, 24)

Naga Christian healing practices and other developments among Naga Christianity, and how this relates to Baum's models of indigenisation.

4.2: Humiliation and the Beginnings of Naga Christianity

In 1834 at the suggestion of a British officer, the American Baptist Mission of Burma was invited to open schools in Assam for Bihari workers in the tea plantations (Joshi 2012, 160). This seems to be both a political and economic decision on the part of the colonialists, as in neighbouring Meghalaya a similar situation arose with the Catholic mission (Natarajan 1977, 58). The benefit of an external mission was twofold: 1) Any development of educational or medical recourses would be funded by the mission, thus reducing costs for the colonialists in an area where they had sustained substantial losses, and 2) Missionaries could win the 'hearts and minds' of the 'natives' and 'civilize' them, in order to make them a potential labour pool (Joshi 2012, 162; Thong 2010, 599).

The American Baptist mission was the only evangelising mission among the Naga until the breaking of their monopoly in the 1950s (Joshi 2012, 194) which is an important turning point in opening the field of Christianity among the Naga to other influences. The early mission had its challenges,[20] in part due to ongoing conflict between the British and the Naga, but after the 1879 rebellion the mission moved to Kohima and put energy into working in the annexed Ao and Angami Naga territory (Joshi 2012, 165-166). The mission headed by reverend C. D. King and his wife capitalised on this by increasing education initiatives as a key method of evangelising (ibid, 165-166). Joshi notes that the consensus in the mission was to emphasise education as an interface for converting the Naga. This seems to have been met with success to the extent that by the 1920s correspondence from the Kohima mission generally focussed on the call for additional funds to open schools at the invitation of Naga villages (ibid, 169).

While Joshi notes that literacy was an attractive feature for the Ao Naga to convert, another factor in making conversion more attractive was the political

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[20] For a more detailed reading of the early Naga Christian Church please see Joshi (2012 chapter five).

restructuring in the wake of colonial expansion (ibid, 169). The Naga villages within territory claimed by the British had additional political positions created to act as an interface with the crown, and these positions required literacy and therefore generated more interest in Naga learning to read and write (ibid, 166). As Sahlins comments: "In addition to the coercion and destruction offered by global capitalism, we should not underestimate the complimentary means of cultural debasement as the propagation of Christianity" (Sahlins 2005, 39). I have infered from the limited sources that the educational initiatives of the Baptist missionaries would have been a likely breeding ground for exposure to humiliating discourses that exposed the Naga to ideas that their current culture was debased in the eyes of Christianity (Sahlins 2005, 39). In the case of the Sora, Vitebsky notes that the newfound ability to read, and the access to Christian literature led to the increased weight of meaning in Christian discourses (Vitebsky forthcoming, 123). Among the Sora there was a clearly documented case of pre-existing cultural categories involving the power of local shamans stemming from their relationship with administrators in the underworld and their power of literacy (see chapter six). The Naga did not appear to share this cultural structure, but the increase in numbers of converts after Christian run education initiatives began suggests that the ability to read and the increased exposure to Christian discourses probably precipitated some instances of humiliation; what these were I can only speculate. While I cannot provide definitive proof as I can in the case of the Sora (the Khasi I will suggest experienced similar phenomena) there is enough clear circumstantial evidence to suggest that education was a means to spread humiliating discourses (Robbins 2016, 17).

As Sahilns notes, there are other methods that can cause humiliation (Sahlins 2005, 39). Medicine was another avenue the mission utilised to propagate Christianity, though according to mission correspondence it was not given the emphasis that education was as a means to evangelise (Joshi 2012, 175). However, Joshi notes that medicine was effective in gaining popular support particularly amongst the Ao Naga, but it was less of a priority than their education program (2012, 174-181). Basic medicines for flu, colds, and stomach issues particularly gained a large degree of support in Ao and Angami villages (those in proximity to Kohima) leading to Reverend King's additional medical training in 1892 and his

return in 1895 (ibid, 179). Joshi notes that within mission correspondence initially the Naga were sceptical of western medicine, but later became enamoured with its effectiveness (ibid, 179). However, there is very little exposition as to how this affected Naga beliefs of their traditional medicine. In light of the development of Naga healing practices discussed in the next section, it is difficult to say what role, if any, this might have played within later cultural processes of re-humiliation and indigenisation. However, I suggest in light of comments by Sahlins (2005, 39) and Robbins (2016, 17) that there are a multitude of sources and discourses that can lead to humiliation, I contend that medicine became another part of the cultural milieu that was likely to led to humiliation. as clearly there was a cause for the Naga to adopt Christianity.

While the demand for education steadily increased (Joshi 2012, 166), the population of Christians remained a relatively small minority in the early 20th century fluctuating between 2.2% and 17.9% from 1911 to 1931 (Eaton 1997, 246). Rapid Christianisation did not seem to occur until a number of concomitant factors arose both in response and independent of each other, and these will be discussed below. That said, the early Christian community that emerged opted for a strict adherence to a Christianity pattern along the lines of Robbins' third model of cultural change (2004, 10), meaning that the early Naga Christians opted for an adoption scenario and the giving up of traditional cultural categories and spiritual practices (Joshi 2012, 183; Robbins 2004, 10).

Early examples of strict adherence to Christian categories began with the formation of new villages for the newly converted (Joshi 2012, 183), which occurred in the 1920s as the Christian population grew upward of five per cent (Eaton 1997, 246). This was a response both by Christian and pagan Naga at the growing tensions between the two communities centring on village participation in annual pagan rituals (Joshi 2012, 188). In this case, many new converts felt no need to make their annual contribution of resources to these village wide rituals or observe "heathen rest days" (ibid, 186).

Non-participation by converts in pagan rituals is just one example of a trend that is observable within all three tribes, namely that early convert communities tended to be uncompromising in their adherence to a Christian lifestyle.

Temperance was another feature and was made mandatory amongst the early Naga Christian community (ibid, 183), a stark hallmark of difference because alcohol consumption is endemic to tribal communities in India. Once Christian communities or social enclaves started to form, the converts themselves either adopted of their own accord or were required to adopt by missionaries, an interpretation of Christian social practice that included an emphasis on temperance,[21] rejection of all things pagan (including dances and dress), and an increased emphasis on faith (Joshi 2012, 184). Before I delve into this matter to deeply, I should balance this general observation against the ethnographic data Joshi provides. She notes that in the early 20th century before the revival movement and the departure of foreign missionaries, there were a significant number of nominal Christians among the Naga who had converted due to social pressure (ibid, 189) or for economic benefits, as there is some evidence of food and monetary gifts to converts. However, this does not undermine the fact that before the 1950s, which held a number of external factors that influenced the growth of Naga Christianity, there was a devout and orthodox core that took on the role of enforcing Christian social practice (ibid, 184).

4.3: War, Revival, and Indigenisation

It is difficult to isolate which factors in the Naga process of indigenisation came first, as the processes that led to the current state of Naga Christianity were protracted and complex. Indeed, as I will illustrate, the Naga process of indigenisation was as much in response to the colonialism of the British Raj as well as the Indian state, as it was to tensions within the Naga independence movement and a search for defining Naga identity against the post-colonial Indian state. This said, an important factor in the development and organisation of the Naga independence movement came during the Second World War. Due to the Japanese insurgence into Burma and subsequent attack on Kohima, in order to raise enough troops to defend against invasion, many Naga were conscripted (ibid, 26-27). Consequently, the disorganised Naga independence movement gained much needed contacts and experience in

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[21] Not drinking rice beer could also be considered a dietary imposition due to it making up a significant portion of the Naga diet at the time (Joshi 2012, 184).

how to organise a resistance (Joshi 2012, 26-27), as well as military training which later led to the formation of armed Naga independence militia (Thong 2010, 597; Joshi 2012, 27).

This led to the crystallisation of the Naga independence movement as both a political and military faction and the subsequent independence struggle of India post Second World War resulted in what has become an ongoing conflict between the Naga people and the Indian government ——one that has periodically maintained armed resistance, but also infighting in relation to how the independence struggle should be maintained pursued. The early independence struggle was punctuated by the decision to grant India, Burma, Bangladesh, and Pakistan independence and to ignore the Naga plea for autonomy (Joshi 2012, 25; Thong 2010, 597). This decision by the crown precipitated what would become a long and tense struggle between the Indian state and the Naga as a whole, one that still has not been resolved. This struggle gave rise to the emphasis Naga place on healing practices (see next section) within their Christianity; as a response to the growing fractures in their society they sought spiritual healing as one solution (Joshi 2012, 189).

However, the rise of healing practices could not have occurred without the arrival of the revival movement. This was a phenomenon that had developed in the nearby state of Mizoram in the early 1900s and intensified in the 1920s (ibid, 197). Pentecostal in origin, its key development was the incorporation of pagan custom in terms of dance and music (ibid, 197), paving the way for the tribespeople of Mizoram to retain pagan practices while still being Christian—or as Joshi notes, the revival movement became the agent of indigenisation (ibid, 197). Connected with this was the emphasis on energetic, charismatic, and emotionally engaging church services (ibid, 197) intended to illicit a connection for participants, similar to those seen on modern day televangelist services (ibid, 225). This included to some extent faith healing, which later developed into bigger events like the Kohima healing camp (see below) (ibid, 225). While the revival movement spread to Nagaland and took hold in the early 1950s——which transpired with the breaking of the American Baptist mission monopoly in 1952——the Catholic mission that had previously been

established to minister to a small congregation of non-Naga workers, was allowed to proselytize (ibid, 194). Two years later the Indian government (and their troops in Nagaland) forced the foreign missionaries of the American Baptist Mission to leave. This led to all Christian missions being headed by Naga, diversification of those missions present for the Naga,[22] and coincided with a dramatic increase in new Naga converts (Eaton 1997, 246).

In relation to the backdrop of the post-colonial struggle for independence and its effects on the shaping of Naga Christianity, it seems worthwhile to note the subtext of identity within this cultural milieu. In the present day, the independence struggle is viewed by the few remaining pagan Naga as a Christian struggle, and indeed many Naga independence groups claim that Nagaland is a majority Christian state unlike the rest of India with its Hindu majority (Joshi 2012, xvi). Similar to the situation for the Khasi, the revival movement and the decision by Naga Baptist Church leaders to allow traditional dance and song to become a regular part church services (ibid, 189) indicates a shift in emphasis on identity. Whereas in early Naga Christianity the emphasis was on the Naga maintaining their newfound Christian culture, the post-partition independence struggle has seemingly given rise to a feeling of a lack of identity.

Tanka B. Subba and Jelle J. P. Wouters (2013) suggest that the history of colonial ethnography, and the definitions of tribes by colonial officers was far more rigid than prior to colonisation (Subba & Wouters 2013, 194). While in the post-colonial scenario many of these definitions were forgotten (ibid, 204), having such a pre-defined identity for such a long period potentially combined with active rejection of traditional practices, potentially constituted a feeling of cultural failing. This suggests re-humiliation, and that the lack of coherent Naga identity post-partition, potentially led to the increased emphasis on amalgamating formerly rejected practices of dance and music in order to maintain a coherent sense of Nagahood. This increased importance of identity would undoubtedly have been further stressed in relation to the Naga independence struggle. This also reflects Baum's ideas on indigenisation, where the tension in the Naga Christian worldview

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[22] Joshi notes that Baptist administration was handed over to local Naga preachers (Joshi 2012, 189).

is that of maintaining identity as a Naga tribesperson, but also maintaining their Christianity.

Faced with the tensions of inter-communal strife and armed conflict, and with a need to make sense of such issues, many existing Naga Christians turned toward revival groups or incorporated revival and pagan practices within their Christianity. This reflects Baum's model of indigenisation, where a community (or individual) that has converted is faced with issues and questions that do not comfortably fit into the framework of their new religion (Christianity in this case) and seek to resolve these issues by reviving practices or ideas of their old religion (Baum 1990, 376).

4.4: 'Crusades', a Christian Majority, and Healing.

A further development occurred after the revival movement took root and Naga Christians had started to adapt some of their Christian categories in response to the revival movement, and this was the development of the 'crusades' which featured faith healings (Joshi 2012, 189). The crusades were a response to increased social and political tension in the wake of conflict between Naga independents and the Indian state army as well as inter-communal strife. Crusades were communal gatherings where Christian Naga (and those who might be interested in conversion) would evangelise and practice faith healing (ibid, 204). What suggests this is that on one hand Naga Christians showed a clear need to re-evaluate their rigid Christian stance in response to the independence struggle and their identity (i.e. through reviving dance and song, but in an objectified sense); on the other hand, conversion statistics in relation to the healing crusades also reflect a general trend of a people as a whole seeking stability and spiritual answers to the questions of their surroundings (Baum 1990, 376). Joshi, notes in this regard that:

> Pesyie-Maase (2009: 30) writes that 'a real spiritual test' (i.e. the capacity of the peoples' faith to endure atrocities) began during the 1970s when the Naga nationalist movement intensified and Angami villagers were forced to take refuge in the forest for days as Indian security forces carried out combing operations. According to Pesyie-Maase, since the 'entry of the gospel' the highest conversions took place when revival swept through the region during these intensified periods of persecution by the Indian security forces (ibid.). (Joshi 2012, 224)

According to Eaton's Christian population statistics (Eaton 1997, 246) this seems to hold true, however, crusades continued beyond the 1970s (Joshi 2012, 189) resulting in the now Christian majority in Nagaland (See Appendix 1). The exhibition of Naga revivalists and healing crusades also clearly showed that one can still be Naga and be Christian—something that has fed back into the independence movement and become part of the independent Naga state identity (ibid, 189). Indeed, now it seems that the few remaining animist or pagan Naga view the independence struggle as a Christian one (ibid, 189). In reflection of Baum's model of indigenisation, where a community will try to bridge the gaps in their new religion with categories from their old (Baum 1990, 376), clearly the confluence of the independence conflict and the arrival of the revival movement gave space for Naga Christians to adapt their existing Christian cultural categories to include transformed healing practices and ideas. This paved the way for other Naga to convert to a Christianity that better suited their complex social and political history.

While dance and cultural dress have been revived and now make up a common part Naga Christianity (Joshi 2012, 198, 208), healing has become the starkest feature of Naga Christianity. This ranges from events that resemble the Mega Church faith healing programs of televangelists like Reverend Billy Graham (ibid, 224), to Kohima healing camps held by the Naga Baptist Revival to usher in the 'Christian Healing Spirit' (ibid, 247), and more personal affairs of individual faith healers. All of this makes up an accepted part of the Christian cultural milieu of the Naga. Individual healers work within the traditional pagan practice of *Themu Mia*, which is practiced by Christian Naga healers alongside their few remaining pagan counterparts. Among those Christian *Themu Mia* healers, some note that when they converted, some of their guide spirits also chose to convert with them, or at some time later (ibid, 133). Alongside there are also Christian Spirit healers who will see patients of any tradition, they will still conceptualise the sickness in terms of malevolent forces or spirits, but take their healing ability from a Christianised rendering of being a conduit for the 'Christian healing spirit' (Joshi 2012, 247). The Christian healing in this context will revolve around calling on the Virgin Mary, Isu (Jesus) or other biblical figures to intercede on the part of the patient and dispel the

malevolent affliction (Joshi 2012, 132, 146). This conceptualisation points toward the transformation of an indigenous category to fit within Naga Christianity. Christian figures replace the guide spirits of *Themu Mia* healer, but illness is still thought of as the negative influences of certain spirits. This may also suggest (as I mention in brief below) that the social rifts stemming from the independence struggle may also be thought of as the influence of malevolent spirits, or perhaps even Satan.

Both Christian and pagan Naga still conceptualise some ills and social ailments (such as moral breakdown) as stemming from the influence of malevolent spirits, as was traditional in the *Themu Mia* (ibid, 125). Joshi does not specify if the Naga Christians conceptualise the independence struggle in spiritual terms—as perhaps the intercession of a malevolent force such as Satan. I feel this would be a fruitful line of research for future researchers who wish to look at the underdeveloped field of indigenised Christianity among Indian tribes.

4.5: Conclusion

The development of Naga Christianity and its indigenisation is in many ways a situation of negotiation and renegotiation of identity in relation to colonial and post-colonial factors. Beginning with the arrival of the British and their endorsement of American Baptist missions, I have proposed that the development of education initiatives was the breeding ground for humiliation and the early Naga community's pattern of strict adoption. This I have argued reflects Robbins' model of adoption (Robbins 2004, 10), where a community completely adopts new cultural categories replacing their existing ones. This was reflected in the closed nature of early Naga Christian communities in isolating themselves from non-Christian Naga communities, their emphasis on temperance, and their abstention from pagan rituals (Joshi 2012, 183-185).

With the breaking of the Baptist monopoly over the Naga, the arrival of the revival mission—with its liberal stance on traditional dance, music and flexibility toward the inclusion of certain pagan practices—the stage for indigenisation was set. However, the tumultuous backdrop of the armed political struggle, and the

increased need for meaning and resolving social tensions drove the Naga to answer new spiritual questions with ideas from their old religion (Baum 1990, 376). In this instance, for the Naga it meant reviving traditional practices like dance and song as a means of maintaining identity in response to the post-colonial independence struggle. These practices were revived much like the Khasi, in a self-conscious and objectified way i.e. that dance and song were Naga 'culture' rather than connected to traditional religious beliefs. Baum's model in this sense is an appropriate tool for analysing the development of Naga Christianity.

For the Christian Naga these social and political issues in the post-colonial milieu resulted in making space not only for dance and song, but as time went by also healing practices to address social fractures as a result of the independence struggle. This I have reasoned stemmed from re-humiliation that was triggered by the environment in which Naga Christians found themselves, i.e. that of a political and social struggle for independence. This process of re-evaluating dance and song, as well as the revival movement was a response to re-humiliation stemming from a lack of coherent Naga identity, one that had been rejected along with the early strict adoption of Christianity. The development of these indigenised forms of Christianity, representing an amalgam of Christian cultural categories and pagan Naga categories, also contributed to the significant growth in Christian Naga resulting in the current 95% Christian majority (Eaton 1997, 246). However, to separate out these processes is not to suggest that one preceded the other; it is more likely that indigenisation and healing crusades as a response to social turmoil, as well as the turmoil itself led to the rise in conversion among the remaining Naga and increased adaptation of Christian categories among existing Christians.

Chapter Five–The Khasi: Indigenisation and Identity Post-partition

5.1: Introduction

The Khasi are distributed across the northeast of India predominantly in the state of Meghalaya, but also with a population in Assam and Bangladesh totalling approximately two million (Government of India 2011). For this chapter I focus on the Khasi within Meghalaya, which like Nagaland currently is a Christian majority state with 74.59% of the population being Christian (Government of India 2011). Among the Khasi in Meghalaya it is estimated that 80% are practicing Christians (Government of India 2011, Natarajan 1977, 96) across a number of denominations, the majority being Welsh Presbyterian (Natarajan 1977, 70). Meghalaya itself is located between Assam and Bangladesh near the other majority Christian state of Mizoram (Government of India 2011).

(Google Maps 2016)[23]

This chapter is based on the limited ethnographic work available on the Khasi, and as such it will focus on historical instances where the Khasi encountered Christianity, how those instances led to conversion, and will discuss general trends observed therein.

Beginning with the arrival of Christianity, the first section will focus on Khasi encounters with Christianity. In light of slightly more information on the impact of literacy, I infer that education initiatives led to humiliation or communicating cultural debasement and transpired in some early cases of conversion. The third section will follow on from this by discussing where the early Khasi Christian converts were strict in their adoption of Christian cultural categories, and where they were not. The fourth section will address the relationship between the Seng Khasi cultural preservation movement and the Christian Khasi's return to some of their rejected cultural practices, including a process of re-humiliation and adaptation of their Christianity to include categories that were previously rejected. In this section I will discuss how I see re-humiliation stemming from the interaction off the Seng Khasi cultural preservation movement, and post-colonial factors influencing Christian Khasi. Finally, I will summarise the observable trends within the Khasi adoption and later adaptation of Christianity and how that relates to the overall theme of indigenisation within this chapter.

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[23] Accessed November 1st, 2016,
https://www.google.it/maps/place/Meghalaya,+India/@25.5597692,90.1855605,8z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x37507e8f34bd207f:0xf5ef6117f496d6e!8m2!3d25.4670308!4d91.366216.

5.2: Cultural Encounters, Humiliation, and the Beginnings of Khasi Christianity

Unlike the nearby Naga, the Khasi were not monopolised by one particular mission in the formation of their Christianity, though the majority of Khasi are members of the Welsh Presbyterian Church (Natarajan 1977, 63). This Welsh Presbyterian majority is likely due to the significant influence Welsh missionaries played in Khasi literacy. The first missionary into Khasi territory however, was the Baptist Krishna Chandra Pal. Pal, who was a convert of William Carey (Mathur 1979, 13-14), who ventured into Khasi lands, and in 1813 was successful in his evangelisation. This led to a small group of converts receiving baptism and the beginnings of a very small Christian community with around eight members (Mathur 1979, 14; Natarajan 1977, 60). It seems that Pal's Baptist mission was to fall second to the Welsh Presbyterian mission, which in 1841 established its presence in the Khasi Hills with a mission in Cherrapunjee (Malikal 2007, 68).

Much like the situation in Nagaland, the Welsh Baptist Mission was invited by the local colonial administration, with the intent that it would help with infrastructure and perhaps 'tame' the locals through conversion (Natarajan 1977, 59; Mathur 1979, 15). The key success of the Welsh Baptist Mission was the work of Rev. Thomas Jones to translate Khasi from a non-literate language into a written one (Mathur 1979, 14-15; Natarajan 1977, 60). While there had been prior attempts to render Khasi in writing using both Bengali (Mathur 1979, 14) and Assamese[24] (Mathur 1979, 97), none drew quite the attention that Jones' work did. Such was the

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[24] A work in Khasi Niam was penned sometime after colonisation, in Assamese. (Mathur 1979, 97).

impact of his translating Khasi into the Roman alphabet that he is now credited with giving birth to Khasi literature (Mathur 1979, 15).

The growth of education and literacy among the Khasi, like that of the Naga, seems a probable breeding ground for humiliation. Again, like the case of the Naga there is scant evidence as to which traditional cultural categories and structures existed prior to the arrival of Christianity that would lead to humiliation—unlike the very clear case amongst the Sora (Vitebsky forthcoming, 33). However, as suggested in the previous chapter, the newfound ability to read, and the access to Christian literature led to the increased weight of Christian discourses (Vitebsky forthcoming, 123). Prolonged exposure to these discourses could lead to humiliation, in the sense of communicating to the Khasi Christian ideas of cultural debasement such as the ills of alcohol consumption and participating in Niam rituals. Natarajan suggests that the Khasi found "a true solution to their spiritual problems in Christ" (Natarajan 1977, 93). While her work is clearly in favour of the conversion of the Khasi (making some of her statements dubious) it is probable that some Khasi would describe their impetus for conversion in this way. However, literacy was a significant milestone for the Khasi as it was even adopted by stalwart Orthodox Niam Khasi[25] giving birth to Khasi literature (Mathur 1979, 15).

Jones was not only responsible for the development of the written form of Khasi, but also for developments in basic technologies including printing—this being a major factor in what seems like the rather rapid adoption of literacy among

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[25] 'Orthodox Niam Khasi' is the term Natarajan uses to refer to the followers of the pre-Christian Khasi religion who were opposed to Christianity and intent on preserving their traditions (Natarajan 1977, 44).

Khasi (Natarajan 1977, 92). Humiliation did not stop there, however, and Jones' missions work also developed medical initiatives and even basic carpentry among the Khasi (Natarajan 1977, 92). This, as well as certain economic incentives from the missionaries (Natarajan 1977, 93) clearly corresponds to some Khasi feeling a sense of humiliation, which led to the adoption of Christianity in part or in whole. As Robbins notes, the discourses and reasons why a people might feel a keen sense of humiliation are numerous (Robbins 2016, 55). As infrastructure and colonial administration developed, literacy was attractive for its connections to growing economic mobility among the Khasi, thus increasing the demand for education. As all education institutions were the outlet of the Welsh Presbyterian mission until it was joined by the Catholic mission in 1872 (Natarajan 1977, 74), the scope for cultural debasement was great in terms of continued exposure to humiliation discourses. However, the story of Khasi Christianity was not an instant success as will be discussed further below.

5.3: Early Adoption of Christianity and Moments of Indigenisation

Much like the Naga in the previous chapter, the early Khasi Christian communities experienced tensions with traditional Khasi Niam followers. This was probably in part due to the strictness with which early converts adopted Christian categories. Orthodox Niam Khasi were also wary of the influence of Christianity and became increasingly so in the latter 19th century, further contributing to community divisions (Natarajan 1977, 94; Mathur, 1979, 89). Khasi Christians, like their Naga and Sora counterparts, generally avoided taking part in annual festivals and sacrifices on a village level (Natarajan 1977, 94; Mathur 1979, 16), which drew the ire

of orthodox Khasi——and in some extreme cases excommunication from the village (Natarajan 1977, 94). This led to conflicts over inheritance and funeral rituals (Natarajan 1977, 94). [26]

Similar to the banning of rice beer amongst the Naga, early Khasi Presbyterians felt it would be necessary for temperance to be a hallmark of Church membership (Natarajan 1977, 126), which is ironic given that Rev. Jones purportedly brought the process of liquor distillation to the Khasi (Mathur 1979, 15) [27]. Incidentally by the 1970s, this category surrounding temperance had been transformed amongst some of the Christians and some had started consuming alcohol again, (Natarajan 1977, 107), a further indication of the later adaptations of Khasi Christianity which later included elements of dance and healing that occurred after an initial period of strict adoption.

In addition to this, other traditional cultural forms were also banned; particularly dance is noted as being a feature that all Christian Khasi should initially abstain from (Natarajan 1977, 127; Mathur 1979, 148). The only group that did not were converts to the Catholic Church, which is most likely due to a general policy dictated from The Holy See of deferring to mission judgement at a local level (Malikal 2007, 263). Who instigated the dance ban is not clear, but it is probable that the importance of not maintaining traditional practices came from the missionaries

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[26] In one such conflict Mathur notes that the death of an unnamed Christian woman resulted in her family negotiating a compromise where she was cremated (a traditional practice), but a portion of her hair was buried in a Christian cemetery in 1853 (Mathur 1979, 16).

[27] As local forms of alcohol generally are a common feature of Indian tribal communities' diets (Joshi 2012, 184 Vitebsky forthcoming), it is very likely that rice beer or other forms of alcohol made up a significant feature of traditional Khasi life. This would probably have been a difficult rule to follow for many Khasi, and no doubt contributed to some members backsliding or continuing to drink while practicing as Christians (Natarajan, 1977, 107).

following a policy of impressing the 'debased' nature of dancing and its connection to pagan Khasi. This is clear in that one of the revived practices of Khasi that they gave emphasis to, was the preservation of traditional dance—albeit now as a predominantly 'cultural' practice (Natarajan 1977, 114; Mathur 1979, 148).[28]

Perhaps an important collection of related categories that did not change amongst the Christian Khasi was that of descent and inheritance. Related to this were practices marking social structure, in particular marriage. Where early Naga Christian adoption seems in many respects 'total,' the Khasi Christians as a whole refused to change their endogamous marriage practices (Natarajan 1977, 101). While this later changed, seemingly through challenges met by urbanisation and immigration of other Indian citizens to Meghalaya (Natarajan 1977, 101), it seems adaptation predominantly extended toward endogamy in terms of marrying within the Christian community, rather than a clan. Historically it has been noted that missionaries did attempt to force marriage between endogamous clans, but that in the case of a Catholic community this resulted in converts backsliding (Natarajan 1977, 102). After such incidents missionaries gave up the issue, and one informant of Natarajan noted that it was because the early converts insisted that it was an

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[28] During a fieldwork expedition I witnessed an Oram wedding in Sambalpur on 27.12.2015. The local Oram Catholics insisted that the dances and music beforehand were an important part of their culture. When I enquired about their origin and connections to traditional Oram culture, two informants virtually chorused each other in saying 'this is our culture [dance] and this is our religion [pointing to the cathedral].' Based on Natarajan's first-hand information, this kind of division seems to have occurred for the Christian Khasi, where by rearranging their cultural categories to include dance again, they did so by removing it from its relationships with the religious, and connected it instead to categories of identity and culture. I postulate that this division between religion and culture is a product of the adoption of Christian cultural values, as prior to conversion tribal communities, generally, don't make this distinction.

injunction from god to the Khasis[29] (Natarajan 1977, 102). Connected to this was the

emphasis the Khasi placed on matrilineal descent and inheritance, which also did

not change drastically due to the adoption of Christianity (Natarajan 1977, 98;

Mathur 1979, 77)[30]. It is important to note that descent and inheritance (as well as

related practises of marriage) fall outside the trend of strict adoption.

5.4: Revival, Seng Khasi, and Change

Charting Khasi Christianity without the development of the Seng Khasi cultural

movement and its effect on Christian cultural categories would very much be telling

half the story. I view the formation of modern Khasi Christianity as the outcome of a

cultural dialogue between the Seng Khasi movement and Christian Khasi, which

arose also at a similar time to the poorly documented revival movement in the Khasi

hills (Church 2010, Synod 2006). This section will address that dialogue, as well as

what little I have gleaned about the revival amongst the Khasi and how this may

have contributed to indigenisation in Khasi Christianity.

As a response to almost eighty years of colonial rule, in 1899 the Seng Khasi

movement was founded (Mathur 1979, 89). Seng Khasi was a cultural solidarity

movement intended to preserve traditional Khasi cultural practices, as literate non-

Christian Khasi especially feared the loss of their traditions with the encroachment

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[29] The Niam religion of the Khasi was traditionally monotheistic (Natarajan 1977 44) Natarajan does note that both Christian and orthodox Khasi alike assert the importance of this injunction - this suggests that perhaps Khasi Christians did not differentiate between their god and the Niam god. This quite possibly was the process of adaptation or indigenisation at play already, as the Khasi informants did not seem to differentiate between the god of Niam or Christianity; however, this can only be placed as an educated speculation, due to insufficient information on the topic.

[30] However, it should be noted that by the 1970s in some places matrilineal descent and inheritance had changed among both Niam and Christian Khasi. It is suggested however, that this was due to urbanisation rather than a direct product of Christianisation (Mathur 1979, 157), as missionaries had never actively preached against this (Natarajan 1977, 102).

of both colonial officials and missionaries. As mentioned above, Khasi Christians were quick to adopt Christianity, with its injunctions against dance and dress (Natarajan 1977, 114), and Seng Khasi saw fit to stymie culture loss and also preserve Khasi Niam (Mathur 1979, 147). It is not totally clear whether Seng Khasi was explicitly anti-Christian, or whether because of existing tensions and a desire to maintain their newfound culture, Christian converts refused to join (Natarajan 1977, 113).[31] What is clear is that while there were other Khasi solidarity movements that took on a political orientation, to which some converted Khasi joined most—likely only due to wishing to continue to maintain traditional political posts in their villages (Mathur 1979, 86, 101)—Seng Khasi was principally concerned with preserving its traditional culture and religion over political aims.

The relationship between the Seng Khasi movement and Christianity was generally antithetical (Natarajan 1977, 114). This is not at all surprising given that part of adoption after humiliation generally implies a debasement of a peoples' traditional culture, and therefore, the view of Christians would be generally geared towards a negative perception of the preservation of traditional categories. As Sahlins notes: "To 'modernize,' the people must first learn to hate what they already have, what they have always considered their well-being" (Sahlins 2005, 38). So the Seng Khasi was an awkward reminder of what the Christian Khasi had given up. Having forsaken traditional dance, Christian Khasi eagerly took up missionary approved dance and musical practices, except of course the Catholics that had not embraced these prohibitions (Natarajan 1977, 114) and then post-independence

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[31] Natarajan claims that Christians as a whole were "militant and refused to join" (1977 113) but due to the clear bias in her work, some of her statements I view with a great deal of caution.

(1947) returned to traditional dance (Mathur 1979, 141, 143). Indeed, one of Natarajan's informants stated that the revival of dance, music, and (interestingly) health practices were key factors that brought all Khasi together (Natarajan 1977, 114). Furthermore, he stated that "to suit modern times, such activities could be performed without the encumbrances of earlier ceremonies or rites *in toto"* (Natarajan 1977, 114).

Given the lack of detailed first-hand accounts, and the fact that all sources generally agree that Christian Khasi later returned to their former dances, songs, and some of their healing practices (Natarajan 1977, 114), what brought about this resurgence of Christian Khasi interest in dance and music is not at all clear in my source material; Mathur seems to suggest it may have something to do with independence and the reestablishment of Khasi tribal identity (Mathur 1979, 141). This indeed is likely part of a much wider equation, and one that I cannot hope to do justice within my thesis, but I would also propose some more parts of the puzzle in light of inferences made from my analytical standpoint.

The Seng Khasis' dogged determination to preserve their traditions I see as an important part of this puzzle, and thus they maintained a visible presence of Khasi traditions that I suggest led to later incidents of re-humiliation, leading Christian Khasi to covet what they had lost. As Baum mentions, indigenisation of Christianity is a process whereby converts answer important questions in their new religion with reference to the old. As I will discuss below, I see this tension for the Khasi manifesting in their post-colonial identity (Baum 1990, 376). As Mathur mentions, since independence Christian Khasi began revisiting and reviving their

practices more and more, and this suggests a desire developed to preserve a sense of Khasi identity amongst the Christian converts.

Subba and Wouters (2013) argue that the post-colonial situation for many tribes in the northeast of India gave rise to a complex interplay of factors, giving identity new importance and meaning (2013, 204). Specifically, they point out that during the colonial period the identity and even names of the tribes themselves were defined by colonial anthropologists cum administrators (Subba & Wouters 2013, 194). They argue that this made a once fluid identity far more fixed (ibid, 204). While this identity was never totally accepted by north eastern tribes (indeed in the post-colonial environment many designations have been forgotten (ibid, 204), it still had an impact on patterns of identification among Khasi, effectively limiting individual identification (ibid, 194). Subba and Wouters reason that in the post-colonial situation, education, political factors, literacy, and greater access to information, have meant that the negotiation of identity among north eastern tribes like the Khasi has become an important tool in self-definition—and within the Khasi case there is a definitive trend toward self-identification for the Khasi in the wake of the post-partition identity vacuum (ibid, 204). This indicates re-humiliation, and that much like the Naga shifting toward re-evaluating their dance and song in relation to their sense of Naga-hood, the Khasi followed a similar pattern in relation to their post-colonial situation.

Returning to the case of the Khasi and reviving traditional practices, Natarajan's informant mentions the dances did not need to be replicated in full (Natarajan 1977, 114). This suggests that while for many Christians the dance itself and the coming together of Niam and Christian Khasi offered unity and identity, the

category of traditional dance and its place within their Christian values had been adapted. This adaptation was to draw the distinction between dance and tradition as a cultural practice, but it was removed from its connection to Khasi Niam, and instead recast as something that makes the Khasi Christian converts, still 'truly Khasi'. Within Joshi's work, the practice of maintaining Naga dances and song, even though now almost all Naga are Christian, serves virtually the same purpose, i.e. a self-conscious and refined objectification of 'culture' and the practices of song and dance (Joshi 2012, 197; Mathur 1979, 143). What this means is that these practices were now part of Naga 'culture' and how they maintained their identity, rather than an intrinsic part of their religious worldview.

In keeping with Baum's framework, if the question for Khasi was the coherency of their identity (Baum 1990, 375-376) and their early Christianity did not answer the Khasi Christians' need for identity, logically they would seek what had given them and their fellow Khasi a sense of identity. Thus, much like the story of Naga Christianity being that of a dialogue between colonial, political, and social factors——Khasi Christianity seems to be a dialogue between those who adopted the newfound worldview of Christianity——and those who did not. Given that the Seng Khasi movement had become marginalised by the 1970s and the Christian population had expanded to over sixty percent of the Khasi population (Natarajan 1977, 96), it seems that Seng Khasi had achieved its aims, albeit not in the way intended by its founders. Seng Khasi had preserved cultural practices that were later readopted and adapted by the Christian Khasi——while approximately ten per cent of the Khasi still practice Niam, the preservation of Khasi practices such as dance seem

to now be in the hands of the Christian majority, albeit in an objectified sense of 'culture'.

Before rounding out this discussion, I would like to add another piece of the puzzle——one that may raise more questions than answers. During the early 20th century there was a revival in the Khasi-Janita hills that seemed to be loosely related to the Mizoram revival (Joshi 2012, 197). The reason for discussing this in great detail is that there is a distinct lack of ethnographic information on the topic. It is noted in two works as having occurred (Church 2010, Synod 2006), but no further details are given beyond Natarajan's notes about local Christian sects that formed among the Khasi (Natarajan 1977, 81-83). These notes are not very detailed, but led me to believe that these churches may indeed be the products of the revival movement. If this revival was similar to the revival in Mizoram and Nagaland (Joshi 2012, 197), it likely became an agent of indigenisation, opening the way for Khasi Christian culture to be more inclusive of traditional elements. Arguably this would have been an early response to the situation of re-humiliation stemming from a lack of Khasi identity as Christians, and potentially a reaction to the persistence of Seng Khasi's cultural preservation efforts. Unfortunately to go further would require a significant amount of research and I offer this as a challenge to future academics.

Suffice it to say, that without the somewhat awkward relationship between Seng Khasi as a religious and cultural preservation movement and the Khasi Christian community, as well as a collective feeling of lacking identity amongst the Christian community, re-humiliation and a re-evaluation of cultural practices like dance and song is unlikely to have occurred. Quite what precipitated this challenge for the Khasi Christians is not explicit, though I have posited that it occurred due to a

crisis of Christian identity post Indian independence, similar to the situation among the Naga. I have also suggested that the poorly documented revival movement may have contributed to the overall set of factors that led to the re-humiliation of the Christian Khasi. By re-evaluating the significance of dance and singing as cultural practices, without the connection to Niam, shows a clear case for the rearrangement of cultural categories. The category of dance and song was rearranged from its original relationship of religious expression to a purely objectivified, cultural expression, and then reinserted into their Christianity with this new meaning, thus resulting in an indigenised form of Christianity.

5.5: Conclusion

Khasi Christianity, as in the other two cases discussed here, started from a point of humiliation due to literacy and to a lesser extent, the material advances of missionaries and colonists. But the element of the impact of humiliation among the Khasi that stands out the most is that literacy and colonisation both led to and gave a platform for the formation of the Seng Khasi movement. This was an important part of the preservation of Khasi traditional art forms such as dance and song, which Christian Khasi later readopted in part. I have argued in this chapter that Khasi Christian indigenisation occurred much like it did among the Naga, after an initial period of strict adoption of Christian cultural categories. While it is not explicit how or why the tensions between the orthodox Niam Khasi and Christian Khasi dissipated, I have suggested that Indian independence may have formed a trigger for a sense of re-humiliation amongst Christian Khasi based on their sense of a lack of Khasi identity. Having lost many of the hallmarks of what made them Khasi, they

sought to re-evaluate their traditional dances and practices and transform them to fit their Christianity, and even move closer together as a community.

I have also pointed out that the ill documented revival movement among the Khasi Christians may have been an early attempt to address this sense of lacking Khasi identity. As Joshi mentions, this also occurred among the Naga in the 1950s, and paved the way for wide spread indigenisation (Joshi 2012, 197), however, without sufficient ethnographic information, this is mere speculation. Like the Naga however, the post-colonial situation and the identity vacuum that Subba and Wouters (2013) point toward, is a coherent element in the re-humiliation of Khasi which led to indigenisation.

Furthermore, I have indicated that while the majority of Khasi Christians rejected dance and other traditional forms, they refused to give up endogamous marriage, or matrilineal descent, and the Catholic Khasi did not totally give up dance. Suffice it to say, the process of indigenisation for the Khasi was one of a dialogue between orthodox cultural preservation and radical adoption, and that the median point between the two seemed to tip the balance in favour of Christianity for the Khasi.

Chapter Six–The Sora

6.1: Introduction

The Sora are the last case study analysed in this thesis, and are also the last to have contact with Christianity. As a people, the Sora are spread over the southeastern region of Odisha (formerly Orissa) on the eastern side of the subcontinent. This chapter focuses on the Sora communities who live near the Eastern Ghats mountain range seen in the map below:
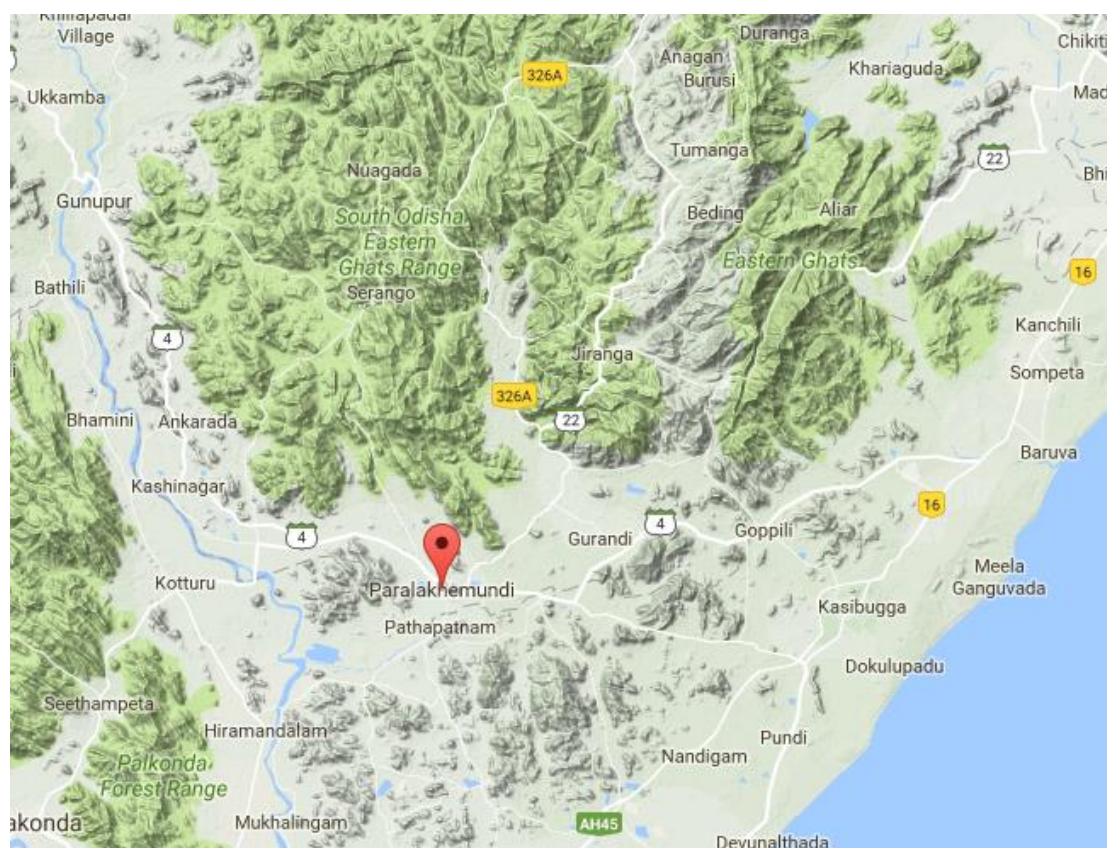
(Google Maps 2016)[32]

Piers Vitebsky has written the most extensively on this group of Sora, conducting several fieldwork expeditions since his first trip in 1975. As a result, Vitebsky has a rich body of work that catalogues the transition that these Sora communities have

[32] Accessed on November, 1st, 2016,
https://www.google.it/maps/place/Paralakhemundi,+Odisha,+India/@18.7824033,83.8135598,10z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x3a3cf7668133b44d:0x6927ee72ce774946!8m2!3d18.7782929!4d84.0936483.

gone through from their collective animism in the 1970s and 1980s to the present day Baptist Christian majority.

This chapter draws on his body of work, which while not explicit in terms of numerical data, paints a clear picture of cultural change and the beginnings of indigenised Sora Christianity.[33] Vitebsky's style is such that he explains complex phenomena in the form of allegorical stories where he presents his informants like characters in a drama, and as such, I will be drawing from this style but expanding on it in my analysis. This chapter is structured in the following way: The first section follows the informant Monosu, who illustrates the complex set of cultural values and real world circumstances that led to humiliation among the Sora and their adoption of Christianity, as well as a brief history of missionary work in the region. The second section will deal with the changes and developments in Sora Christianity up to the present day in terms of Sahlins' model of adoption and any cases of indigenisation and re-humiliation. The third section will weigh the Sora's adoption and what indigenisation there is, relative to the other two case studies, and suggest tentative future cultural developments, followed by a section of concluding remarks for this chapter.

6.2: The Canadian Mission and Young Monosu's Changing World

The Sora encounter with Christianity began in 1909 with Canadian Baptist missionaries establishing a Church in the Hindu majority town of Parklakhemundi (Vitebsky 2008, 248). The mission later built a small bungalow in the Sora hills, and by the 1940s had begun to intervene between Sora and castes of moneylenders, especially with their collaborators amongst Sora village headmen (ibid, 248).[34] Both

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[33] For the purposes of this thesis I will generally refer to Sora Baptist Christianity simply as Sora Christianity, despite being aware that a small amount of Sora also practice Roman Catholicism (ibid, 24, 177) due to it being the majority religion in Vitebsky's case study.

[34] A Headman is a political position designed as an interface between colonial administration and the Sora in terms of maintaining law and order. A headman will liaise with the *barik* who will then act as an informant and intermediary with police and other administrative offices. Headmen continued in a similar way post-partition. They cooperate and more often than not collaborate with their local *barik* to exploit recourses from other Sora (ibid, 25, 116)

the arrival of the missionaries and their intervention in the relationship between village headmen——*bariks* (see below)——and moneylenders, had such a significant cultural impact that some Sora (such as Monosu and his father Bongalen) turned to the missionaries to gain their assistance——especially through the power of literacy. Vitebsky details the significance and role of the *barik* and how both he and by implication missionaries impacted on this relationship:

> By living with the Sora and learning their language, I was directly threatening the linguistic monopoly of the *bariks* of Puttasing. *Bariks* acted as interpreters between the Sora and government officials, and one *barik* was assigned to each village. Sora people could not speak Oriya, and Oriya people—apart from the *Pano*—could not speak Sora. The *bariks* were in a position of total control, since there was nothing an official could find out from the Sora or convey to them without the message passing through this linguistic bottleneck. (Vitebsky forthcoming, 39)

By extension this meant that moneylenders could no longer exploit Sora for the exorbitant fees associated with collecting livestock for the various sacrifices associated with Sora animist rituals——especially those associated with the dead (ibid, 163). *Bariks* along with headmen made up a significant part of the complex Vitebksy refers to as *Panchayat raj*[35] (ibid, 234) or the regime of the local political structure that marginalised Sora due to their linguistic isolation.

This was mirrored in Sora animism through the figure of the shaman. Shamans mediated between departed Sora *sonums*[36] who would sometimes cause illness among the living, and could be placated through regular dialogues,[37] eventually leading them to become ancestors.[38] Shamans achieved this kind of policing of the departed through their marriage to *ilda sonums* (guide spirits) in the

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[35] Sometimes referred to by Vitebsky as *Domb Raj*, but never explicitly stated in his monograph. The *Panchayat* was a colonial interface between the cenralised government of the Raj and the isolated areas of tribal communities that relied on *bariks* or local administrative officers who knew the territory and language of the tribe/s in their charge would act as a go-between for tribes and the British administration and police as a sort of distant means to keep order. This system was continued with minor modifications after independence, and in the case of the Sora (and potentially many other tribes) this was to their ultimate exploitation until literacy became widespread, leading Vitebsky to term it the rule of the local officers or *Panchayat Raj* (Vitebsky forthcoming, 234).

[36] Definition in footnote 14.

[37] For a more detailed description of the content of these dialogues see Vitebsky (forthcoming, Chapter Three) and Vitebsky (1993).

[38] For a more detailed discussion on this please see Vitebsky (forthcoming, 113) and Vitebsky (2013).

underworld who were conceptualized as Hindu *kshatriya*s who make note of the wayward spirits in their underworld ledger through the power of the written word (Vitebsky forthcoming, 33). The irony in the shaman's guide spirits "who were Hindus from the high *kshatriya* castes: bureaucrats, soldiers, armed policemen, even rajas—the very same kinds of people who oppressed the Sora in ordinary life" (Vitebsky forthcoming, 33) is fairly self-evident. However, the *ilda sonum's* literacy is precisely where the shaman derived her power (ibid, 33, 295) as a clear contrast to the lack of power many Sora faced in relation to the *Panchayat Raj*, but in order to underpin this situation I will detail the account of Bongalen, Monosu's father and the sense of humiliation he felt.

Monosu's family came from the village of Sogda, one of the main settlements of Sora in which Vitebsky lived during his initial fieldwork. Sogda had been under the headmanship of Sirdoro since 1934 (ibid, 116), and he had utilised his position to amass a great deal of wealth and bonded labourers[39] to work on the various rice plantations that he owned. Monosu's father Bongalen had inherited all of his family's land due to all his brothers dying of smallpox (ibid, 117). Sirdoro had hoped to claim the land in the event of Bongalen's death, and as such put much pressure on the man to sell him the land. Bongalen had been determined not to submit to the headman's pressure, and built a house on the land which was in Ongara. Vitebsky recounts a key incident as follows:

> I could already feel a provocation coming in the narrative; and so it did. One day in 1944 Monosu's father Bongalen was plowing right up to the edge of his field and accidentally dug up some turmeric roots belonging to a man from Sogad called Gurpio. He went and apologized and gave back the turmeric, but Gurpio went to Sirdoro and complained, 'Look, Bongalen and his brothers have stolen my turmeric.' Sirdoro saw his chance. He conferred with his *barik* and together they went to the police station in Puttasing to lodge a case. (ibid, 116-117)

Bongalen was taken with two brothers to the police station, then later transferred to the administrative capital in Koraput some 210 kilometres away (ibid, 117). Three months later Bongalen returned with his brothers having had to walk the route back

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[39] For a full explanation of how Sora could become essentially debt enslaved see Vitebsly (forthcoming,116) and his discussion of the economic incentives for conversion (Vitebsky forthcoming, 163).

(ibid, 118). The saga continued when the complainant Gurpio was later killed by another village member, and purportedly hid in the jungle before making a deal with Sirdoro to frame Bongalen (ibid, 118). This case was eventually thrown out, so Sidoro had Bongalen's sister abducted, raped and essentially ransomed back to her family in a socially humiliating series of events (Vitebsky forthcoming, 118). After these traumatic events Bongala had an epiphany:

> After the turmeric incident Monosu's father looked around for protection, and found it in the idea of literacy: if this is how the police and the lda sonums get their power, why not do it for ourselves? There were no schools, so he sent his son Monosu, then probably aged around thirteen, to learn writing from Indoro and Damano, two early Baptist pastors in the orbit of the mission bungalow in Serung. (ibid, 122)

From there Monosu learned to read and write Sora and Oriya, the former having now become a written language (for some Sora) through the work of Mrs Munro[40] and a few early converts. In this regard Vitebsky notes:

> The new skill of literacy gave added attractiveness to these [Christian] ideas.   Around 1947 Monosu asked Miss Munro for something to read, and studied her 1939 translation of the Gospel of St John. 'Kınsale moiñlai, I was pleased with myself.' He was especially fascinated by the role of Jisu's blood. 'When I read 'except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you' (John 6:53), I thought, 'This is just like our sacrificial buffalo!'' (ibid, 123)

This statement echoes Sahlins' comment that exposure to Christianity's message can engender a sense of cultural debasement, which could lead to wider cultural humiliation and adoption (Sahlins 2005, 39). However, the initial humiliation for the Sora clearly came from their linguistic bottleneck (Vitebsky forthcoming, 33), or the linguistic isolation due to their need to communicate through the medium of the *bariks*, the only translators available to the Sora. With access to the written word and emancipation from the regime of the headmen and *bariks* coming through Christianity.

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[40] Mrs Munro was one of the early Baptist missionaries stationed at the mission house in Serung. She played a pivotal role in helping to translate early Sora into a written language and training Damano, the influential early Sora Baptist pastor, both of whom taught a young Monosu literacy and Christianity (Vitebsky forthcoming, 122-123).

6.3: Sora Christianity, Orthodoxy, and the Rise of *Pastor Raj*

In the last section I addressed how linguistic isolation and the monopoly of the *bariks* led to cultural humiliation, and how Christianity provided its escape through education and literacy. In this section I turn toward Sora Christianity as it is now. This section will detail instances of the strictness of Sora adoption of Christianity and highlight some of the examples of Baum's second model of conversion. This model describes how converts generally accept the interpretation of Christianity given by their leadership (Baum 1990, 375). For the Sora this has replaced the *Panchayat Raj* with what Vitebsky (forthcoming, 132) terms *Pastor Raj*, and may hint at future indigenisation.

As in the case of the Naga and Khasi, temperance, or the abstinence from alcohol, became a hallmark of Sora Christianity. Early missionaries would remark that *alin* (a traditional Sora alcohol from fermented tree sap) was fine in moderation (Vitebsky forthcoming, 184). However, the first generation of Sora Christian pastors, including Damano (a charismatic figure and mentor to Monosu), understood the connection between *sonums* and *alin*:

> But Damano understood the deeper meaning of alin: if you let the sonums back in, they will never let go again. 'It's the sonums' big need,' Monosu explained. 'There can be meat, rice, a shaman sitting there ready, but if there's no alin, nothing can happen."
> (ibid, 183)

As a result of this awareness, alcohol has been more or less removed from the Sora Baptist community. While indeed there are still incidents of young Sora Christians sneaking out and drinking, for them it has no connection with the dead (Ibid., 184). Indeed, the Sora Bible has been edited such that social drinking has been rendered "getting drunk" (ibid, 184)

Now communion amongst the Baptist Sora is managed with a unfermented fruit juice from seedpods (ibid, 185). This shows a clear logic at preserving a particularly strict interpretation of Christian practices, or at the very least, the division between old and new. It also echoes Baum's second category of conversion,

i.e. accepting the interpretation of religious leaders, as the Sora converts and their offspring have generally accepted the interpretations of Sora Pastors (Baum 1990, 375).

Another area of change in Sora society was a new emphasis on marriage. Vitebsky notes that in animist society, the death ritual and the ongoing rituals involving the departed, formed the basis of communicating their worldview (ibid, 105). In contrast, for Sora Christianity marriage became "an arena for the assertion of new values, through a new discourse of discontinuity as well as of restraint, abstention and control" (ibid, 168). Vitebsky commenting in this vein observes the following:

> The selection of Biblical quotations, the women's silence, and their veiled heads all seem very masculist. Even when I prompt them, I have hardly ever heard a woman express any opinions on church administration or Christian doctrine, even though (or perhaps because) they are the objects of much of these domains. (ibid, 167)

Moreover, Vitebsky comments that:

> There was a mention of legitimate sexuality in the service of fertility ('be fruitful and multiply,' Genesis 9:7), but with no link to Ancestors even though this link is very strong in the Jewish culture of the Old Testament. (Ibid, 167)

One clear contrast in Vitbesky's retelling of these events is the very prominent place women had within animist ritual, especially in the role of the shaman. Additionally, there is the wider implication of a departure from the relative freedom women had in animist society (ibid, 163). It also reflects Vitebskys observations about the concomitant nature of ideas of Christianity and (access to) modernity within the Sora case (ibid, 299)—in that modern Christian society is founded on the institution of marriage as a crucible for Christian norms and values (ibid, 167). This is in stark contrast to the rather relaxed approach toward marriage and elopement within animist society (Ibid, 163).

In Monosu's case this was emphasized by the early Sora Church when in 1976 he was reprimanded for taking a second wife and eloping with her (ibid, 123, 229). Within Sora animist culture polygamy was an accepted practice, this was not so in Sora Christianity (ibid, 26), despite the contradiction with the biblical figure of King Solomon and his many wives (ibid, 160). Indeed, Monosu was censured so badly that

he was removed from active preaching within the Sora Baptist community and dropped from the Old Testament translation team (ibid, 145)——something that continued even after the pair parted ways in 1977 (ibid, 132). This rather extreme response was a hallmark of what would later be termed by Monosu and Vitebsky as *Pastor Raj*, or the rule of the pastor (ibid, 132).

By the 1990s Sora Christianity was moving toward becoming a total institution of the *Pastor Raj* (ibid, 145), where the dialogue between the spiritual authority and the layperson left no room for the laity's response (ibid, 174), rather than the dialogues of old with shamans and *sonums* (ibid, 176). Pastors gained materially from their position no doubt due to the tithing policy of the Sora Baptist church that has been in place since the 1950s (ibid, 160). Showing all the hallmarks of wealthy Hindus with their dhotis[41] and white shirts that once perhaps served as a way of differentiating them from animist shamans, now are far more emblematic of the importance pastors see in themselves. Vitebsky comments that early pastors like Damano were high-minded, but now the current state of the Sora Church seems to be money and position driven (ibid, 160). In this regard Vitbesky notes:

> These are serious questions, but few pastors and probably no catechists are well enough trained to match the monopoly of knowledge that they claim. Often the response to parishioners who ask difficult questions is an angry 'Who are you to ask?' (*amen boten*) or 'Hey! Are you testing me? (*ai! tungjingting po?*).' Many laypeople have their own Sora Bibles, but there are no commentaries to guide interpretation or debate. (ibid, 160)

There are underlying tensions within the regime of the pastors, and pending questions that are not being addressed; these are expressed vividly in the next section and are questions that may hint towards coming indigenisation.

6.4: Marriage, Death, and how it Might Indicate Future Indigenisation
From the last section it should be clear that Sora Christianity is still very much operating within the parameters of adoption as described in Robbins' models of

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[41] A *dhoti* is a single piece of cloth, usually unstitched, that is approximately four metres in length and is tied around the waist and pleated to look like loose baggy trousers. Higher caste Hindus as a status symbol, traditionally wear this garment.

cultural change, with a communal stress on strict reproduction of Christianity (Robbins 2004, 8) under a would-be rule of pastors. While there are apparent tensions between the Sora and their *Pastor raj*, it is too early to ascertain if this will result in re-humiliation and seeking answers to these tensions with an adaptation of Christian categories through a revival of some animist ones (Baum 1990, 346).

Furthermore, unlike the Khasi and the Naga, for the Sora there has not yet been (perhaps there may never be) the influence of revival movements, nor has there been a cultural preservation movement like Seng Khasi as a counter voice, or the complex ongoing independence struggle of the Naga. So with these factors (or lack thereof) in mind, I would like to pose where I see possible grounds for indigenisation for the Sora, albeit in an immature form.

The key area I see that could to some degree be a crucible for indigenisation in Sora Christianity is the Sora Christian discourse on the dead. The "Sora pastor's handbook" devotes five pages to marriage, but a scant few lines to funerals (ibid, 176). Indeed, pastors regularly make the bare minimum of address by the Sora graveside, confirming death but seldom making a speech about the person's life as many might expect (ibid, 176-177). Vitebsky notes that in the case of Paranto, the son of a long time informant, this hesitance to engage in dialogue even about the deceased—let alone their emotions about the potential state of the departed (Vitebsky 2008, 251). Monosu noted of Damano, that he understood the connection between liquor and the dead (Vitebsky forthcoming, 184)—it seems the Sora Christians understand the connection of the dead to dialogues:

> 'No, we don't feel sorrow,' Sojono confirmed, 'we don't remember them. If we remember them, we fall ill: 'They're talking to me again, they're paying me attention again,' the dead person says'. (ibid, 177)

Here the idea still persists that someone can become ill due to the work of a *sonum*, and in many ways it is a concept that remains intact from Sora animism. This is a widespread sentiment among the Christians "remembering makes you ill" (ibid, 177).

The understanding that the dead may still return is also a central theme in practices that have developed during Christian burial. The deceased are given new

clothes and have money placed on them——this is permitted by pastors (ibid, 177). However, out of sight of the pastors, the dead have their old belongings like footwear, combs, and clothing gathered and buried. Vitebsky remarks: "This is rationalized as, 'He touched it, we may see it and feel sad'" (ibid, 177). But there is also a more menacing rationale: "'He may come back looking for it'" (ibid, 177). This may be tied to the other tension that exists for Sora Christians. As Vitbesky mentions, there is a sense that there is a lack of completion (ibid, 177), no doubt referring to the emotional catharsis of animist rites. In Paranto's case this is clear in his inability to articulate not only his grief, but his uncertainty as to the fate of his animist father (Vitebsky 2008, 251). But perhaps it underlies a more serious tension, in that Sora animists have a clear narrative history of their journey towards ancestor-hood and crop fertility, and one that is connected to a family processing grief (Vitebsky forthcoming, 207). Sora Christians however, do not have a story (ibid, 207) save that remembering might induce their ill willed return. While this is far from the development of the highly rationalized healing practices of the Naga (Joshi 2012, 189), to summarise Vitebsky's words, the Sora Christian community seems to pull toward wanting meaning and a narrative for their dead and their pastor kings wanting the opposite (Vitebsky forthcoming, 177).

This ambiguity in Sora Christianity——the loss of narrative, perhaps even identity, for the dead——seems to be the kind of tension that could lead to indigenisation in Baum's terms i.e. answering questions of the new religion with ideas from the old (Baum 1990, 375). For the Sora Christians, their new religion does not answer lingering questions as to where and who the dead are, and the development of clandestine practices that seem to reference animist ideas seems to suggest that that tension will catalyse Sora Christianity. This then might lead to a sense of re-humiliation and a move to adapt current Christian categories to include animist ones, or in Baum's terms, answering the questions of the new religion with answers from the old. However, indigenisation is not an assured phenomenon for the Sora, and will only become visible retrospectively.

6.5: Conclusion

The Sora's situation of being monopolized by corrupt *bariks* due to their monopoly on communication (Vitebsky forthcoming, 39) provided a keen sense of cultural humiliation, one that had been woven into their social world and their animistic cosmology. The arrival of Christianity and the advent of Sora as a written language along with access to the official state language provided an escape from this humiliation; many Sora converted to Christianity to gain this power, or they did so by exposure during instruction, as in Monosu's case (Vitebsky forthcoming, 122). This led to rapid Christianization amongst the Sora, and the development of the *Pastor Raj* as a replacement for the *Panchayat Raj* (ibid, 234), placing Sora Christians under a current regime of strict interpretation and adoption of Christian categories. These echo the model of adoption previously discussed (Robbins 2004, 10) and Baum's second model of converts' adherence to the Christianity presented by their leaders (1990, 376).

With the lack of a cultural preservation movement like that of the Khasi, or an independence struggle like that of the Naga—and the revival movement that swept both—indigenisation may not occur for the Sora. However, the tension that exists between the pastor's lack of answers on certain key topics, particularly the departed Christians, may be evidence of future re-humiliation and a revival of some animist practices. This is the kind of tension that Baum speaks of when he details that indigenisation occurs when converts attempt to answer questions that affect the new religion with answers from the old (Baum 1990, 376). Whether this occurs for the Sora as it has done with the Naga and Khasi is a matter for time, and the subject matter of another thesis.

Chapter Seven–Conclusion

7.1: Introduction

Within this thesis I have focussed on the topic of cultural change, particularly through the process of conversion, which in many respects is a little like walking into a theatre halfway through a film to write a review. Cultural change is an ongoing process as individual actors negotiate the world, which in terms of Sahlins' work involves risking cultural categories which may trigger cultural change (Sahlins 1987, xi). Regardless of the analytical framework taken, analysing cultural change is very much like giving a view of culture from the point of view of a film camera, in that only so much can be captured. However, this does not render the process of performing such an analysis fruitless—this is merely to reflect on an academic reality of the limitations of any kind of analysis. To conclude this thesis, I focus on two main areas—a reflection on my comparative analysis of my three case studies and how they informed my central observation—that the indigenisation of Christianity occurs after a period of strict adoption (Robbins 2004, 10) of Christian cultural categories if re-humiliation occurs. And, in the final section I reflect and evaluate my own approach and some of the potential shortcomings.

7.2: Summary of my Analysis

This thesis began from the point of a regional comparison, patterned along the lines of P.E. de Joselin de Jong's concept of an FES (1980, 319) where I sought to examine and compare processes of cultural change leading to indigenisation of Christianity among three Indian peoples—the Khasi, the Naga, and the Sora. I have approached these processes through the lense of Robbins' models of cultural change, namely absorption, transformation, and adoption (Robbins 2004, 8-10). Within this however, I have linked Baum's idea that indigenisation of Christianity occurs when a converted community seeks to resolve the tension within their new worldview with answers from their former one (Baum 1990, 346). This I have argued can take the form of reviving cultural practices, ideas, and discourses, and adapting their Christian categories to include them (Robbins 2004, 10; Sahlins 2005, 19). This I

have termed re-humiliation to acknowledge that for a society to convert to Christianity humiliation must occur, and that in instances (e.g. the post-colonial identity negotiation of the Khasi), further change was precipitated by a renewed sense of cultural failing. Re-humiliation formed the process where a people re-evaluate and transform their rejected categories to transform traditional categories to become compatible with their Christianity.

Throughout my analysis I identified a trend—that after a period of strict adoption to Christian cultural categories there was a tendency to indigenise (or adapt) Christianity in response to incidents of re-humiliation. This observation came about through the application of P.E. de Josselin de Jong's methodology, as above all, the Khasi, Naga, and Sora represented mutually comprehensible case studies (P.E. de Josselin de Jong 1980, 319). Culturally the Khasi, Naga, and Sora were similar enough to work as a viable comparison (greatly due to being tribes within an Indian context), but their circumstances are different enough to exhibit why this trend clearly holds true for the Khasi and the Naga—but not for the Sora. While I have argued that I see potential tensions within the Sora context, mostly centring on the lack of narrative among Christian Sora theology for the dead, I cannot argue with certainty that indigenisation will occur for them. And this is why their inclusion within the thesis was so important, because they help to make clear the differences in cultural milieu that were required for the other two tribes to want to indigenise some of their Christian practices.

The Naga situation represents a complex interplay of colonial and post-colonial factors, coinciding with the revival movement, which resulted in a current Naga Christianity that emphasises healing (Joshi 2012, 197). This emphasis is a clear response to the social tensions from the intersection of the independence struggle and the revival movement (ibid, 197). This confluence led to re-humiliation amongst the Naga and the rise in their now diverse Christian culture that features many indigenised categories—this indigenisation also seems to be a motivation for the historical rise in conversion statistics. Interestingly in the case of the Naga, their Christianity became a theme in their independence struggle.

The Khasi case is that of their Christianity stemming from an oppositional negotiation with a cultural preservation movement, the possible influence of the revival movement, and a post-colonial search for identity. This I have argued resulted also in re-humiliation and adaptation of Christian categories to retain important Khasi practices that have become a hallmark of identity, such as dance, some medicinal practices, and matrilineal descent (Natarajan 1977, 157). The result is that the Khasi Christians have become the proponents of their own culture's preservation, seemingly to the detriment of Seng Khasi, its former oppositional cultural movement (ibid, 114).

When compared with the Sora and their current lack of indigenisation, the aforementioned trends of indigenisation among Khasi and Naga become quite clear. While I have used the term humiliation here in relation to the former sense of cultural failing that led each of these three tribes to take up to Christianity, re-humiliation is the process where practices and categories that were rejected during the initial humiliation are later transformed and reinserted into their Christianity. Re-humiliation helps indicate that because of other factors within a cultural milieu, the originally strict Christian communities of the Khasi and Naga felt a sense of cultural failing—one that drove them to adapt their Christianity structure to include solutions to their unique situations—or in terms of Baum's ideas, re-humiliation led to a tension in the worldview of the converted community, which they resolved with solutions from their former worldview (Baum 1990, 376). In the case of the Naga and Khasi this was the interplay of social tensions, either from the independence struggle (Naga), or a cultural preservation movement (Khasi), and the post-colonial identity vacuum (Subba & Wouters 2013, 204).

As I have explained in relation to the Sora, it is too early to tell if they will indigenise their Christianity. In comparison to the Khasi and the Naga, the Sora lack the same kinds of challenges, so they may not ever form similar kinds of indigenised Christianity to those of their two counterpart tribes in this study. This said however, Vitebsky's observations about the current tension between laity and pastors— relating to the lack of narrative about dead Sora (Vitebsky forthcoming, 177)— indicate that there may still be scope for indigenisation. The limited practices that

Vitebsky observed as part of this tension, I feel are not widespread enough to form the basis for a solid argument that indigenisation will occur. In this sense time will tell, and I hope a future academic will take up that challenge in light of Vitebsky's retirement in 2016. This said, in respect of my methodological framework, I am grateful the Sora case presented a contrary study to the Khasi and Naga, as this underpins the effectiveness of using P.E. de Josselin de Jong's FES as an approach in making clear——at least in the case of the Khasi and Naga——why they adapted their Christianity and through which cultural processes.

7.3: Reflecting on this Thesis

The most challenging aspect of writing this thesis was finding sufficient and reliable ethnographic information. As I mentioned in my introduction, the study of Indian tribal cultures outside of the subcontinent is an underdeveloped field——within that field the study of tribal Christianity and conversion is even less prevalent. To some degree this general lack of study is what motivated my undertaking this comparative study so as to at least analyse what scholars might infer from appraising the studies we do have on tribal Christianities. And I also hope my thesis will act as inspiration for future scholars to approach the topics of conversion, indigenisation, and change in an Indian tribal context, as there is much work that can still be done. If scholars wish to document these phenomena I implore them to act swiftly and carefully in documenting these communities, because the current political climate in India is becoming increasingly inimical towards Christian communities.[42]

With this in mind I have attempted to do a first analysis of the comparative processes of indigenisation of Christianity within the Naga, Khasi, and Sora communities. But this is an analysis not without fault, and in light of my biggest challenges, I think one shortcoming of my analysis is having not been able to explore the relationship between the motivations for cultural humiliation and

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[42] For a brief overview see Froerer 2010 *Religious Division and Social Conflict: The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in Rural India*, Pralay Kanungo 2010 and Satyakam Joshi 1999.

indigenisation, or lack thereof. There is every possibility that one of the reasons why the Sora have not gone through a process of indigenisation stems from their motivation for conversion. Literacy held huge cultural and spiritual significance for animist Sora and as such Christianity became the vehicle for their emancipation from exploitation within the *Pachayat Raj* system (Vitebsky forthcoming, 234). I feel that my inferred argument, that a combination of education by Christian missionaries, literacy, and access to jobs and material development under the British Raj, is theoretically sound as it is based on Shalins idea that humiliation can be triggered in many ways (Sahlins 2005, 39). However, it still remains a theoretical argument and would be a worthy topic of research for future scholars to clarify.

In reflection I have presented within this thesis a structurally influenced approach toward the discussion of indigenisation of Christianity among three tribes in India. I feel satisfied in my attempts at utilising a regionally comparative framework and not falling prey to the issues of presenting a homogeneous view of the process of indigenisation. If anything, the idiosyncrasies of each case study, especially the contrasting case of the Sora, seem to prove the continued validity of comparative approaches and P.E. de Josselin de Jong's notion of mutual comprehensibility (P.E. de Josselin de Jong 1980, 319). Furthermore, within this analysis I have utilised a combination of Robbins' and Sahlins' approaches to discuss culture and cultural change. With Sahlins' influential career in academia (one that as of completing this thesis continues), I can scarcely do justice to his work. Suffice it to say, that while a structural approach may have its naysayers, it still provides an effective and manageable way of comparatively analysing cultures.

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Appendix 1: Naga Christian Statistics

These statistics are taken from Eaton (1997) and represent the most accurate Christian population statistics up to 1990.

Table 1. Christian Population of Nagaland, by Census Data, 1881–1981

Year	Total Population	Christian Population	Christians as Percentage of Total
1881	94,380	3	0.003
1891	122,867	231	0.18
1901	102,402	601	0.58
1911	149,623	3,308	2.2
1921	160,960	8,734	5.4
1931	178,844	22,908	12.8
1941	189,641	34,000	17.9
1951	205,950	93,423	45.7
1961	369,200	195,588	52.9
1971	516,449	344,798	66.7
1981	774,930	621,571	80.2
1990			90.0

Source: Census of India, 1881, Assam, 22, 38; 1891, Assam, 16; 1901, 4/2:1, 9; 1911, 3/2:2, 14; 1921, 3/1:26, 61; 1931, 3/1:200; 1941, 9:2, 23, 10:8; 1951, 12/2A:2, 107; 1961, 23/2A:154; *Statistical Handbook of Nagaland*, 1973, pp. 44–46; *Census of India*, 1981, national volume, pp. 151–56. The percentage for 1990 is an approximate figure and not an official census figure. See Jacobs, *Nagas*, p. 174.

(Eaton 1997, 246)