

## **CHRISTIAN LITURGY AND THE TRIBAL IN NORTH EAST INDIA**

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In this article, Archbishop Dominic Jala, SDB traces the varied tribal elements in embracing the sense and spirit of the Christian liturgy. For the tribals, according to the author, celebration is never an individualistic event. One does not celebrate anything alone. Celebrations are community events. The community-oriented character of the people makes it easy and meaningful for them to gather for religious events. The celebration of the mysteries of salvation, sacraments, are well received by the tribals of the North East. Archbishop Jala also surveys the significance and relevance of the celebrations of the sacramentals in the tribal setting. He gives testimony to the use of indigenous symbols in the life of the Christians of the North East. Towards the end of the article, the author delineates certain issues and their theological and liturgical significance are highlighted.

When in 1890 the Catholic missionaries formally started mission work among the peoples of what is now popularly known as Northeast India, it was the beginning of a new era especially for the tribal people of this region. It was the beginning also of a process of what would later be termed as the interaction between cultures and between religions. This touched most visibly in the worship of the people. What the process was and what impact it possibly had both on Catholic worship as well as on the tribal religious ethos is the subject of reflection in this article.

### **I. TRIBAL SOCIETIES IN NORTHEAST INDIA**

#### **1. The Tribals**

According to the 2001 census, India has 84.33 million citizens belonging to scheduled tribes. This constitutes 8.2% of total population. There are 461 groups recognized as tribes; but estimates place them at about 635. Their presence extends from Gujarat in West to NE India. The highest concentration of tribal societies is in central India which has about 50% of the tribal people of the country. The highest ethnic diversity among indigenous and tribal population is found in the North East region which has about 220 distinct groups. North East India has 12% of the total indigenous/tribal population of India.

Many factors have drawn the attention of the Indian Government to this region. Among them, the more commonly reported is the persistence of what are called "insurgent" movements in the various states of the region. Recently, on a more positive note, it is the country's "Look East Policy" that has brought economic and trade planners to chart out a progressive way ahead.

The use of the word "tribal" is not without its own problems both in common parlance and in scientific writings. Often the term is used in affinity with words denoting "primitiveness". In anthropology, the word 'tribe' "implies a group of people sharing common heritage, language, values, customs, dresses, traditions, lores, legends, arts, handicrafts, food habits, political institutions, etc., as common traits or features in a closed society with a concept of small nationality within the limits of self-confinement. Hence many tribes consider themselves as the only human beings."<sup>1</sup> When we speak of the various ethnic groups of Northeast India or of anywhere in the world, we have to move away from the denigrating associations and, rather than judging societies from our particular standpoint, we have to learn to get into those particular societies and speak from that angle. For this reason, many social thinkers prefer to use the term "indigenous people", which, however, carries with it political nuances that many ideological groups do not subscribe to.

## **2. The Catholic Church in Northeast India**

The Catholic Church's particular involvement among the people in this part of the world officially began in 1890 when the Salvatorian Missionaries came to the newly erected Prefecture of Assam, with its centre in Shillong. The Church suffered a severe set back during and immediately after the First World War which forced the German Missionaries to leave. Gradually from 1922 a new wave of missionary activity began with the coming of the Salesian Fathers, Brothers and Sisters who poured in human and material resources into a dynamic mission work. During the last 30 years or so, the Church took firmer roots among the various peoples of the region with an encouraging growth of local Diocesan clergy and the collaboration of many religious congregations of men and women. In the span of 75 years since the erection of the Diocese of Shillong, the Church has grown to 15 dioceses, with a total of around one million members.<sup>2</sup>

## **II. CELEBRATING THE LITURGY IN TRIBAL NORTHEAST INDIA**

The one act of Christian worship, down through the centuries and in all cultures and among various kinds of peoples bears the undeniable characteristic of unity in diversity. One mystery that is celebrated, inexhaustible and unfathomable, seeks expression in various forms and through various cultural expressions. It is quite natural to observe that, given its particular setting, the Church's celebration of the liturgy will bear a special stamp because of the interaction between faith and culture in the region.<sup>3</sup>

### **1. The Concept of God Among the Tribals of Northeast India**

Religious worship first of all depends on the concept of God in the overall world view of the worshippers. Christian liturgy mediates, even in an imperfect way, various ways of imaging God. It uses categories like the "physical or sensory setting, language, and social setting."<sup>4</sup> Tribal traditional religions are based on a firm belief in a Supreme Being who is invisible, somewhat distant. He is the creator, from whom we have been detached by some sinful event. We make no images of him. Each tribe will have different

ways of naming him and he is invoked in all kinds of rites that are performed. Prayers are addressed to Him, the Supreme Lord of all. However, in the realm between the visible world and the invisible divine Lord, there are what we can call the "spirits" who need to be addressed. There are the benign ones as well as the malevolent ones who are considered as the cause of illnesses and troubles.<sup>5</sup>

The tribal will easily feel at home in Christian worship in which one directs one's heart to the one God of all. The mystery of the Trinitarian God, of course, leads to another level of faith expression that will pose a particular difficulty, as in the case of all peoples of the world.

## **2. Christ-centered Worship**

Unlike in the other parts of the Indian Church, especially in the Southern part of India, popular devotions like devotion to the Saints is minimal if not non-existent. The Eucharist and Christ-related devotions play a central role. Alongside the various forms of devotion to Christ, Marian devotions also play an important part. This is strikingly evident especially in the context of the sharp attacks that various Christian denominations level against the Catholics for their veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Thus though a parish, for instance, is dedicated to a saint, the feast of the Parish is marked by a solemn Eucharistic celebration and, in most cases, by a solemn Eucharistic Procession. In many instances, as in the Garo communities, the faithful gather over a period of three days for catechesis, hold a Marian candle light procession on Saturday evening and Sunday is solemnized by the Eucharist and the Eucharistic Procession. Two Christ-centred devotions have taken deep roots in various communities: Devotions to the Sacred Heart and Devotions to Divine Mercy. Many homes have the enthronement of the Sacred Heart celebrated and renewed yearly with the observance of the First Fridays already now an integral and characteristic part of Catholic life.

It might be not far from the truth to say that this very minor role played by saints is also due to the attitude instilled by various protestant groups who preceded the Catholic Church in the region. And yet, it appears strange that among people who hold the 'ancestors' in special regard and veneration, veneration of saints plays almost no role at all. In the final analysis, it can be considered a healthy trend that the Church in this region has grown in this tradition.

## **3. The Community that Celebrates**

To celebrate comes naturally to a tribal. Every group has its cycle of feasts and festivals. These often coincide with the cycle of events in their agricultural field. What supports the rhythm of festivities is the sense of community that marks tribal societies in a very distinctive way. Celebration is never an individualistic event. One does not celebrate anything alone. Celebrations are community events. "The village acts as a unit in all matters and if anybody

fails to attend a common function, he is fined. ...It is not only that the individual has to give his time and energy for the welfare of the community but also the individual is amply rewarded in return in every way, especially in time of difficulty and misfortune. It is the village community and clan members who would immediately come to his assistance.”<sup>6</sup>

The community-oriented character of the people makes it easy and meaningful for them to gather for religious events. As among the Khasi-Pnar Catholics, it is common for groups of the faithful from one parish to go and join in the celebrations that are being held in other parishes or other dioceses of the region. It is a much more common custom for various groups of the faithful from parishes to organize community religious events in villages where the number of the faithful is small or insignificant in order to generate the sense of belonging to a larger community.

This is one of the central elements in the renewed liturgy of the Church which readily finds acceptance in our tribal cultures.

#### **4. The Word of God**

Among the great contributions of the Protestant missionaries were the translations of the Bible in whole or in part in various languages in which the missions were being established.<sup>7</sup> In many of the languages of Northeast India, at least a part or the whole of the New Testament has been published by the Protestants or by both Catholics and Protestants. In Catholic worship, many of the tribes use the Protestant Bibles, with all their limitations, while working on a proper Catholic version.<sup>8</sup> The delay in having the Word of God in all the languages is due to the difficulties to find translators who would do justice to the Bible and the cost of producing a translation for, in many cases, a very small group of people using a particular language.

#### **5. The Role of the Sacraments**

Christian life is sanctified and strengthened by the sacraments that the Lord gave to His Church. The celebration of the sacraments finds a welcome home among the tribal societies of North East India. We can say that in the traditional religion of the tribals itself the life cycle is marked by different rites which make it easy to pass over to the Christian pattern of sanctifying life. Occasions that deal with life and death are accompanied by at times elaborate rites that involve expensive offerings.

Every culture has its own rites for initiating newly born members into the community. This starts from the moment a child is conceived and is carried in the womb of the mother right to the time a name is given to the child.<sup>9</sup> The celebration of the sacrament of Baptism absorbs the elements associated with the traditional naming ceremonies. Thus, among the Khasi Catholics the term “baptisma” is interchangeably used with “jer kyrteng” (naming). Usually in distant villages, the sacrament is given when the priest visits the community. In parishes within townships, a Sunday within the month is usually indicated as the day for baptism of children. Adults are normally

baptized on more solemn occasions when the community gathers for the festive Eucharist around Christmas and Easter.

The Sacrament of Confirmation, among the Khasi people, needs a comment. It is now also called "*Ka Pyngeh Rngiew*" alongside its more traditional Christian literal name, "*Jingpynskhem*". This focuses the effect of the sacrament on the strengthening of an important part of the person – the "*rngiew*" – which can be considered equivalent to what we could call "spirit" of a person in relation to "soul" and "body". When a person has his "spirit" or his *animus* or his *psyche* weakened or threatened especially by outside elements he needs to be strengthened again in order to function properly as a grown up person.

In tribal thought there seems to be no place for God pardoning sins. Authors who have produced monographs on the religious observances of various tribes do not speak of this theme at all or point to the contrast between traditional religion and Christianity.<sup>10</sup> Catholic theology of sacramental pardon for sins is a new concept and it is readily accepted. The meaningfulness of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is further enhanced when some protestant calumnies about this sacrament – such as that Catholic priests take money for pardon of sins – are found to be totally false by protestant observers themselves.

Marriage is a rite that every culture has surrounded with many and varied rituals in order to express the role that this social institution plays in the continuance of a social group.<sup>11</sup> While church rites are celebrated, traditional customs are observed in the family and may be integrated and brought into the Church rite as well, as has been in the Khasi Catholic celebration of Marriage<sup>12</sup>. In such celebrations, the roles played by the clans and their representatives are given importance. The various rites that are celebrated serve to place the newly married couple within the social and religious structure. In the process of Christianization, values like Christian monogamy and evangelical marriage morality served to challenge many traditional practices and because of the contribution to marriage stability and respect for persons, they are accepted though they need to take deeper roots. Among the liturgical practices we observe in various local Churches are organized celebration of marriage in groups as is done among the tribals of Assam, rectification of marriage of those who have lived in concubinage as is common, especially in more remote villages.

## 6. Veneration of the Dead

Tribal societies have evolved elaborate rites to deal with the phenomenon of death and the burial or cremation of the dead.<sup>13</sup> Various religious traditions attribute to the spirits of the deceased a dwelling place in the life after earthly life. Dangerous and inimical spirits need to be placated in order to ensure safety for the journey to their resting place among those who have died before them.

Christianity brought in a new element with the teaching of the Resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the body/of the dead. We speak of heaven,

hell, and purgatory. The concepts are easily understood when this new world view is accepted. Catholic rites of burial are appreciated. Offering of Masses for the repose of the souls of the deceased are customary. Most significant of all, in this context, is the special importance given to the blessing of the cemeteries as, for instance, among the Khasi Catholics.

One phenomenon that the Catholic Church in Shillong has sought to deal with is the *Tyurut* which could be considered the evil power that descends upon persons or a family on account, for example, of a violent death in the family. Keeping in mind practices in traditional tribal religions, the rite called *Ka Mait Tyurut* is conducted in order to ward off such evil power through the power of Jesus, the Risen Lord, who has overcome death through his own violent death through his glorious Resurrection.<sup>14</sup>

An area that has to be studied as part of the process of inculturation is the integration of the Khasi and other tribal religious customs connected with erecting memorials for the dead.

### 7. Sacramentals

Great value is given to the use of various sacramentals in tribal societies. As noted above, the blessing of the cemeteries is held in great esteem because it is also linked to Christian eschatology. The Easter season blessing of homes is considered an indispensable part of the priest's pastoral ministry. The wearing of rosaries and medals is most eagerly accepted. In fact it is easy to spot a Catholic in remote villages by the rosary that is worn around the neck. The use of Holy Water is common and falls in with many of the tribal traditions connected with the use of water and of streams that flow through the hills. Though Protestantism did not use religious images, with the coming of Catholicism into the region, even the poorest of Catholic homes cannot be thought of without even a picture of Christ or of the Blessed Virgin on the wall. More well-built homes will have a corner dedicated to a family altar.

### 8. Coping with Sicknesses

Traditional religion had its ways of dealing with the problem of illness. Divination rites to discover the cause of the illness are performed. It is not uncommon to find that among those who have accepted Christ, there is a strong pull to satisfy one's longing for healing by going to any extent even if it involves heavy expenditure. The easier accessibility to modern medical care does not fully satisfy the need for holistic healing. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is longed for but, the true nature of it being a sacrament of the sick and not of the dying is still to be fully accepted and given its fair place in the life of the people. Many priests and religious are called for prayer over the sick and the suffering and in some cases prayers for deliverance from the evil one is requested.<sup>15</sup> The use of oil blessed at special Charismatic prayer meetings is much sought after as an instrument of healing. The devotion to the Divine Mercy, in particular, is attested as one of the ways in which God has brought healing to many people.

## 9. Lay Missionaries

Catholic Liturgy cannot be fully conceived of without ordained ministers. However, as is evident in the history of Catholic missions in the North East, the role played by lay catechists deserve to be highlighted as a major factor for the spread and the growth of the faith.<sup>16</sup> It is the lay leaders who take responsibility for organizing religious services especially on Sundays in communities where there is no Eucharist. The local leader/catechist leads the prayers, sees to the proclamation of the Word and gives a sermon. He is the one to whom the local community, often situated at a great distance from a parish centre, has recourse in all kinds of spiritual needs, particularly for praying over the sick and in the event of deaths, for conducting funeral rites.

## 10. Touring Sisters

A distinctive feature of the Missions of North East India is the presence and missionary activities of the "Touring Sisters". Every mission centre has, in most cases, two religious Sisters who are entrusted with the mission of going to the villages, spend time with the faithful, visit the families, catechize the children and the adults and prepare them for the sacraments. In many of the Dioceses these Sisters are expected to spend a total of 20 days every month in the villages. Their presence is indispensable for the proper organization and celebration of the Liturgy especially in sub-centres of the parishes.<sup>17</sup>

## 11. Indigenous Symbols

One area where some initial steps have been taken is the development of indigenous symbols for Christian liturgy. The Cathedral Church in Kohima, constructed along traditional Naga lines, is a prominent example. In the outskirts of Shillong is a small sacred shrine, built on the model of the Khasi religious house, or the *l'ingsad*, and located on the summit of the Khasi sacred mountain, *Lum Sohpetbneng* (literally: umbilical cord of heaven). However, still more needs to be done in this line as also in developing locally inspired religious iconography. Initial steps in this direction is the enlisting of the contribution of young Khasi artists for the development of true Khasi Christian liturgical and catechetical art.

In the celebration of sacraments and sacramentals, the placing of symbols like water, oil, light and salt in the context also of traditional uses of such elements underscores the cultural foundation for receiving the Gospel and the liturgical forms of the Church.

More recently, the use of traditional musical instruments is making its way into liturgical celebrations. This is in line with the development of traditional liturgical music. The use of traditional drums, of other flutes and stringed instruments certainly create a more congenial celebration that will enlist more active and conscious participation in the liturgy.

Language as one of the main symbols that links people of a cultural group together has become more exploited for liturgical use. In a number of languages like Khasi, Karbi, Tiwa, Bodo, Garo there have been positive steps

taken to develop a sacred language that is closer to how tribal people would pray and worship God.

One area which underlies most of the system of sacred symbols is the complex of religious legends and myths of the tribal societies. Any monograph on the people of Northeast India is incomplete without a reference to some of such myths. These deal, for instance, with the creation of the world by God and the origin of man and woman on earth, with God's dealing with the world and with the origin of various religious rites that are performed.<sup>18</sup>

## 12. Festivals

What, in a very significant way, serve to bind a tribal society together are the various festivals that mark the yearly calendar of every tribal group. While with the spread of tourism such festivals begin to take a more social public appearance, they still have a particular function for the tribe. In one particular case, the contribution of Fr. Sngi Lyngdoh has greatly helped to clarify and separate the religious from the socio-political aspects of the *Shad Nongkrem* and the *Pomblang*, annually held in November. This has made it possible for a more constructive dialogue and collaboration between Catholics and the politico-religious traditional leader of the Khyrim kingdom. Similar attempts have to be made for the festivals of other tribal societies in the region. Important also is the celebration of the Adivasi Karam festival among the Plain Tribals of Assam.<sup>19</sup>

For the past few decades, a number of parishes in the Shillong Archdiocese have been marking Christian celebrations of Easter with the Easter cultural dance at which traditional dancers both Christian and followers of traditional religion participate at the Easter afternoon gathering. The practice keeps spreading to more parishes as of now. In this connection, the acceptance of tribal dances, for instance, for the Mass during the visit of Pope John Paul II's to North East India, in Shillong on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1986 has served to encourage attempts to integrate such elements into the liturgy. The local Church is still trying to study more deeply the possibilities and significances of such attempts.

## 13. Prayer Book

A very important place is to be given to the Prayer and Hymn Books in the various languages. The demands made by celebrations in the vernacular in the post-Vatican period has acted as incentive for many pioneering missionaries to compile such books for the use of the faithful. These are indispensable companions for the faithful both for worship and for daily keeping in touch with the Lord in prayer. Examples of such books are *Lynti Bneng* in Khasi, *Jisuna Rasong* in Garo, *Soroke Lama* in Tiwa, and *Sining Atovar* in Karbi, besides the portions of the Roman Missal that have been translated into most languages for the use of the communities. The multiplicity of languages makes the task of producing such books in all the languages a formidable task. However every effort, no matter how small, is a great step ahead for nourishing the Christian lives of the people.



### III. FURTHER ALONG THE WAY

The short journey that the Church has made in the region has produced the most amazing of results. It would not be an unfounded statement to say that one of the most fruitful missions of the world is this region. However, the fruits reaped from the efforts made in the past can be considered only a foretaste of what should come further along the way. The trees have to be pruned and grafted anew. Corrective measures and creative fidelity in celebrating a living liturgy for the people is possible. Some issues need to be highlighted here.

Our worship has certainly to go deeper into the root mystery of Christian faith. For this we need an on-going dialogue between the Gospel and the tribal cultures which the Church has encountered and continues to encounter. The cultures are in a stage of transformation due to the many forces that have emerged, for instance, due to globalization. For this task of dialogue, the various narratives that give a distinctive character to the tribe need to be taken more into consideration.

An important issue that keeps emerging in the region is that of identity. In fact many social scientists keep pointing to this issue as one underlying many of the social disturbances and even of violence in the region.<sup>20</sup> Can the Church, can our liturgical celebrations also seek to help people to maintain and assert their identity, while keeping the universal and catholic openness to all cultures?

The celebration of Christian worship has to also sensitize the communities to serious issues that the tribal societies face today. Among them are the evils of corruption, the problem of conflict and the promotion of conflict-resolution,<sup>21</sup> a more dedicated Christian response to the problem of poverty and especially rural under development. What Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel observed is pertinent here, *mutis mutandis*: "Other powerful instruments for bringing about a new consciousness and new attitudes among our people are common worship, instruction on social problems. Worship should reflect the resurrection that the community is striving for. Preaching should start with the human situation and how Christ's resurrection can also take place in and for their community in a temporal context now and not merely eschatologically. We will also have to learn to interpret God's word in a new key, let me say, in an Adivasi Key."<sup>22</sup>

About 35 percent of the total population of the region is composed of youth. And the youth of today are at the cross-roads between modernity with all its challenges and traditional cultures and their values. Can the liturgies and the preparation for them in which the community is largely composed of young people help to give them a sense of hope and direction? This is a challenge that the Churches have to constantly seek to answer.<sup>23</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The above reflections on liturgy celebrated in its various dimensions in the Northeast region of India are a seminal attempt to look at the picture that

God has helped us develop and thus enrich the beautiful living mosaic that is the worship of the universal Church. As in the rest of the Church, the task of renewal and of rediscovering our roots to meet the challenges of changing times will also have to address the demand for a life-changing worship of God. The interchange that the Church in the tribal region of Northeast has always experienced with the rest of the world and with the other parts of India will certainly help us to creatively provide answers to new questions and new demands.

#### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Kamal Narayan Choudhury, *Tribal Culture of the North-East*, Punthi Pustak, Kolkata, 2003, p. 14.
- <sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive early history of the Church in Northeast India, see Christopher Becker, SDS., *The Catholic Church in Northeast India: 1890-1915*, revised & edited by Sebastian Karotemprel SDB., Becker Institute: Shillong, 2007; Joseph Thekkedath, SDB, *A History of the Salesians of Don Bosco in India*, vol. 1, *From the Beginning up to 1951-52*, Kristu Jyoti Publications, Bangalore 2005, pp. 99-217; George Kottuppallil, 'A Historical Survey of the Catholic Church in North-East India from 1627 to 1983', in M.C. George, (ed.) *Centenary of the Catholic Church in North-East India 1890-1990: A Souvenir*, Archbishop's House, Shillong, 1990, pp. 7-55.; Jacob Aluckal, *The Catholic Church in Northeast India*, Archbishop's House, Shillong, 2006.
- <sup>3</sup> See Aloysius Hemrom, SDB., *Liturgical Contribution of the Salvatorians during the years 1890-1915 to the Catholic Church of Northeast India: A Liturgico-Historical Study on the Archival Sources*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, PIL, Rome, 2004.
- <sup>4</sup> Kathryn Ann Piccard, 'Images of God in Liturgy', in Peter E. Fink, (ed.) *The Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, = A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1990, p. 513.
- <sup>5</sup> See for instance, Dr. Angeline Lotsüro, MSMHC., *The Nagas: A Missionary Challenge*, Vendrame Institute Publications: Shillong 2000. pp. 19-20; H.O. Mawrie, *U Khasi bad la ka Niam (The Khasi and his religion)*, Ri Khasi Press, Shillong 1973, 28-33.
- <sup>6</sup> Angeline Lotsüro, op. cit., pp. 29-30.
- <sup>7</sup> Cf. Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1964, p. 263-264.
- <sup>8</sup> The latest contribution, as far as is known now, is the Catholic *The New Testament in Nokte* (a language of a major tribe in East Arunachal Pradesh), translated masterfully by a postgraduate linguistic scholar belonging to the Nokte tribe itself.
- <sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Francis Kanjirathinkal SDB., '*Rite de Passage of the Lotha Nagas*', in Jose Kuruvachira SDB-Francis Kanjirathinkal SDB (editors) *Readings in Cultures of Northeast India*, Vol. 1, Salesian College Publications: Dimapur, 2007, pp. 10-14; Homiwel Lyngdoh Ka Niam Khasi, Major PRT Gurdon, *The Khasis*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1907; reprinted 1975, pp. 124-127; Kameswar Brahma, *A Study of Socio-Religious Beliefs, Practices and Ceremonies of the Bodos (With special reference to the Bodos of Kokrajhar District)*, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1992, pp. 64-70.
- <sup>10</sup> R.T. Rymbai, 'Christian Missions and the Indigenous Religion of the Khasi-Pnar', in Dr. Soumen Sen, (ed.) *Religion in North-East India*, Uppal Publish House, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 75-76.; R.T. Rymbai, 'Some Aspects

of the Religion of the Khasi-Pnars', in Sujata Miri, ed. Religion and Society of North-East India, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1980, p. 54 "The differences between Christianity and the Khasi-Pnar religion are many. For instance, the Christian once he has sinned can always pray to Jesus and be forgiven, whereas a Khasi, if he commits ka pap ka sang, can never be forgiven by God or society"

- <sup>11</sup> Cf., for example, P.R.T. Gurdon, *op.cit.*, pp. 129-130.
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. Ka Lynti Bneng, (Khasi Prayer and Hymn Book), pp. 296-305.
- <sup>13</sup> see, for instance, for the Bodos and the Khasis Kameswar Brahma, pp. 70-75; PRT Gurdon, *op. cit.*, 132-154. Julius L. R. Marak, *Balpakram: The Land of Spirits: Garo Mythology*, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2000; chapter 4: Life after death, pp. 66-70
- <sup>14</sup> See Sohblei (Dr.) S. Sngi Lyngdoh, SDB., *Ka Jingmait Tyrut bad ka Jingdonkam jong Ka (ad experimentum text)*, Archbishop's House, Shillong, 2007.
- <sup>15</sup> When one visits the Sacred Heart Theological College, one is struck by the many people who flock to a veteran local missionary, Fr. S. Sngi Lyngdoh, SDB, for prayer over all kinds of sick people, for the Pyneh Rngiew of those who have suffered because of psychological shock of any kind and for deliverance from evil powers.
- <sup>16</sup> Cf. for instance, George Maliekal, *History of the Catholic Church among the Khasis*, pp. 167-170; 267-268.
- <sup>17</sup> Cf. Sr. Philomena Mathew, MSMHC., 'The Portrait of a Touring Sister', in Angeline Lotsüro MSMHC-Philomena Mathew, MSMHC, (ed.) *Touring Sisters in North East India In the Area of Evangelization and Development*, Archbishop's House, Guwahati, 2005, pp. 72-81.
- <sup>18</sup> See for instance, Abhijit Choudhury, "Descent of the 'Seven Huts': Folk Narrative as Structure of the Khasi Pnar Consciousness", in Sukalpa Bhattacharjee and Rajesh Dev (editors), *Ethno-Narratives: Identity and Experience in North East India*, Anshah Publishing House: Delhi, 2006, pp. 40-63.
- <sup>19</sup> Nazarius Lakra, SDB., 'Adivasis of Assam: Their Cultural History and Festivals with Special Reference to Karam', in Jose Kuruvachira SDB and Francis Kanjirathinkal SDB (editors), *Readings in Cultures of Northeast India*, Vol. 1, Salesian College Publications: Dimapur, 2007, pp. 87-102.
- <sup>20</sup> cf. SUKALPA BHATTACHARJEE – RAJESH DEV, (eds.) *Ethno-Narratives: Identity and Experience in North East India*, Anshah Publishing House, Delhi, 2006; WALTER FERNANDES (ed.), *The Indigenous Question: Search for an Identity*, Indian Social Institute: New Delhi, 1993; V.K. Nuh, *Struggle for Identity in North-East India: A Theological Response*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati & Delhi, 2001.
- <sup>21</sup> Cf. Anuradha Dutta & Ratna Bhuyan (eds.), *Genesis of Conflict and Peace; Understanding Northeast India: Views and Reviews*, 2 vols., Peace Studies, OKDISCD & Akansha Publishing Houses, New Delhi, 2007.
- <sup>22</sup> Sebastian Karotempel, 'The Future of the Adivasi Community in Assam and the Role of the Christian Churches', in SEBASTIAN KAROTEMPREL and B. DUTTA ROY (eds.) *Tea Garden Labourers of North East India: A Multidimensional Study on the Adivasis of the Tea Gardens of North East India*, Vendrame Institute: Shillong, 1990, pg. 403-404.
- <sup>23</sup> Cf. SHELA BORA & S.D. GOSWAMY (ed.) *Youth at the Crossroad: A study of North East India*, DVS Publications: Guwahati, 2007