

In Search of A Context for A Contextual Theology: The Socio- Political Realities of "Tribal" Christians in Northeast India

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The Politics of Ethnonationalism in Northeast India

Two communities of Northeast India, the Nagas and the Mizos, did not hoist the Indian national flag on the day of Indian independence on August 15, 1947. There was a "successful" protest among the Mizos against the celebration of this day as the day of freedom.¹ The Naga National Council, which claimed to have represented the entire Naga population, was more than reluctant to become part of the independent India. Many Nagas regarded the 14th August 1947 as the Independence day of Nagaland.² Following the beginning of an armed uprising in 1955, Nagaland was declared a sovereign independent state with the formation of the Naga Federal Government in march of 1956. Ten years later, the Mizo National Front, a political party of the then Mizo District of Assam, declared the independence of Mizoram from India. The ensuing counterinsurgency movements in the two regions were accompanied by large scale disturbances and inexplicable military atrocities by the Indian armies. The fact that the Mizos and the Nagas are the two "most Christianized"³ communities of India raised suspicions about the role of Christianity in these so-called separatist movements.

The Hindu fundamentalist groups such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) denounced conversion to Christianity as the root of these separatist movements.⁴ Many Indian scholars also

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correlate conversion to Christianity with the secessionist movements. A large number of non-Christian scholars may still agree with S.P. Sinha who said,

They [the Christian missionaries] are responsible for fanning the basic distrust and fear among the Hillmen [sic] for the plains-men [sic]. In fact Christian missionaries are there not for advocating a faith but for keeping imperialism alive.⁵

The causal relationship between Christianity and the secessionist movements, however, lacks historical evidence. The allegations against Christian missionaries have slowly subsided as independence movements have been taken up by non-Christian communities in the region since the late 1970s.

The signing of the Peace Accord in 1986 by the Mizo National Front and the Indian government put an end to the movement for independence in Mizoram. In Nagaland, the independence movement slowly lost its popular grip among the masses. Since the late 1970s, especially after the failure of a peace attempt in 1975, the movement seems to have been left to two hard-core revolutionary groups of National Socialist Council of Nagaland. However, the antagonistic relationship between the Mizos and the Nagas on the one hand and their "non-tribal" neighbours on the other is as vigorous as ever. The fire of secessionism has spread to other states of the region. Today, in addition to Nagaland where the two groups of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland are still very active, the United Liberation Front of Asom is fighting for the independence of Assam; in Manipur the United National Liberation Front and the People's Liberation Army seriously engaged themselves in the struggle for the independence of Manipur, and in Tripura the All Tripura Tribal Force demands a separate homeland for the tribals of the state.⁶ For this author, all these movements for independence or for greater autonomy are outward expressions of inward conflicts. These movements arose out of the conflicting loyalties of the people, the conflict between their ethnic identities and their political identity as citizens of India. In some ways, the movements may also be seen as the product of the conflict between what anthropologist Clifford Geertz calls primordial and civil sentiments of the

people.⁷ The civil sentiments—in this case—should be identified with the national majority's Indic sentiments. One intent of this paper is to show that this loyalty dilemma issues largely from the national majority's socio-religious system in the "secular" India. Even in places where the independence movements has lost its vibrancy (such as Mizoram) or where there has not been such a movement (Meghalaya), ethnonational⁸ feelings are very strong. To blame colonial legacy or Christianity as the root cause of the problem, in the opinion of this writer, is to miss the common thread that binds all the movements together. This, however, is not to deny the role Christianity plays in augmenting ethnonational feelings within the Christian communities, but to suggest that the impetus behind ethnopolitics in the entire Northeast India lies in historical, racial, and cultural differences. In what follows, I will propose that the manner by which the national majority tries to incorporate these ethnically distinct peoples called "tribals"⁹ undermine their differences. Consequently, the "tribals" felt that they have been dragged into a "foreign" system of social hierarchy which they resent. The "tribals." In my opinion, are repugnant to the socio-religious hierarchical system inherent in the Indic civilization. This very system, in their perception, has been imposed on them against their will.

In the multicultural and pluralistic society of India, attempts to construct theologies of the people on the peripheries including the so-called "tribals" have become a prevalent scholarly exercise. This paper does not try to make a full-fledged theological analysis nor tries to exert all appropriate theological themes. The modest intent is to expose the socio-political reality of the "tribal" people of Northeast India. Presuming that meaningful theological constructs can be made only with a perception of the reality of the people's life, I am trying to present what I think is the crux of the socio-political problems facing the Northeast Indians in general and the tribal Christians in particular. If this paper either provokes debates or incites further analysis toward constructing "tribal" theologies, I will consider my purpose fulfilled. The political and sociological interpretation offered in this study in part aims at an honest sharing of views for a better mutual

understanding between the Northeast "tribal" and the rest of the Indians.

The Region and its Historical Context

What is called Northeast India (hereafter NEI) in this paper is a cluster of seven states in the eastern most part of India. Physically, it is connected to the rest of India by a small strip of land in its western corner. With the exception of the Mughal empire in India which ceded the western part of Assam for a brief period in the second half of the seventeenth century,¹⁰ there had never been a political linkage of the region with India before the British period. Nevertheless, religious and cultural connection with the Aryan-India had been maintained by the "non-tribal" population of the plains. Hinduism appeared in the history of the Assam plains as early as the writing of Mahabharata in which assam was mentioned as Pragjyotisha.¹¹ The large-scale spread of Hinduism among the masses, however, in Assam and the neighbouring Manipur and Tripura appeared to have been relatively late. In the case of Assam, such a movement is dated to have begun in the later part of the fourteenth century and in Manipur, since the early part of the eighteenth century.¹² The British officially annexed parts of Assam in 1826, made Manipur a "Vassal state"¹³ in the same year, and gradually added the adjacent hill areas to Assam. For most of the hill inhabitants, this was the first interaction with the outside world. The fertile and naturally rich plains of Assam and the naturally poor frontier hills were administered differently. On the heels of the colonizers were the missionaries representing various denominations and countries. Among the Protestants, churches that originated from the American Baptists and the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists became the two largest denominations. The hill-dwellers and their racial counterparts in the plains came to be called "tribals" by the white administrators and missionaries.

Identity Dilemmas

An emerging group of socio-political analysts on NEI accuses the British policy of segregation as the main root of the

ethnopolitical tensions in the region. The policy is played out clearly, they would argue, in the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 and the Government of India Act 1935. The former, which is still continued today by the independent India, prohibits outsiders from entering the hills areas without permission. The latter conferred the status of "Excluded Area" to most hill areas of NEI "whereby the elected provincial legislatures ceased to have effective jurisdiction over these tribal tracts."¹⁴ This policy of segregation, they would conclude, foments ethnic identity consciousness, and the political turmoil in the region is largely the result of the "tribals" attempts to safeguard their ethnic identity.¹⁵ The Colonial Government's explanation of the policies was—and in the case of Inner Line Regulation, the independent Indian Government's explanation has been—that they sought to safeguard the interests of the "tribals." While the position of this group of scholars is fairly well-argued, it fails to take the historical context seriously. It overlooks the fact that before the British period NEI was never part of India. In fact, it was the British who incorporated the region, especially the hill areas, as part of India. Furthermore, no attention is given to the Indian socio-cultural conditions in which the "tribals" find themselves.

As indicated earlier, the thesis of this paper is that a socio-cultural identity crisis underlies the ethnic-based political endeavours in NEI. The so-called "ethnic unrest"¹⁶ in NEI witnessed in these four decades of India's independence can be explained as part of the communities' attempt to re-define their identity in the changing socio-political scene. There are at least two layers of ethnic identity dilemma to be recognized. These are: identity dilemma experienced internally by the communities, and identity dilemma in relation to external communities. While this paper will concentrate on the latter, a few clarifications of the former are due. By internal ethnic dilemma, I mean the problem of ethnic boundaries and definitions between the "tribes." A few examples may clarify the point. A person of a "Hmar" "the tribe" or clan in Mizoram identifies herself or himself as a Mizo, whereas a "Hmar" in Manipur state identifies herself or himself exclusively as a "Hmar." In fact, names of "tribes" like "Mizo" and "Naga" are

generic terms and have boundary problems.¹⁷ This problem is more acute for the various “tribes” in the state of Manipur which lies physically between Mizoram and Nagaland. Besides, when it comes to defining identities, what constitutes a “tribe” and what constitutes a “clan” are problematic. Internal ethnic-identity dilemmas of NEI have received a good number of attentions in recent years,¹⁸ but the tribals’ problem of identity caused by factors external to their communities, especially the impact of the identity imposed on them by “non-tribals” has not been given due attention. In the remaining sections of the paper, I will try to address this issue, speaking as a member of one of the “tribes,” i.e., Mizo. I deem it important that a voice from within be heard in this question. The problem of identity in relation to “non-tribals” arose, in my opinion, largely as a result of the collision between the tribals’ ethnic pride and distinction, on the one hand, and the Indian social hierarchical system, on the other. What exactly is the place of the NEI “tribals” in the eyes of the national majority? How acceptable is the Indian caste system to the “tribals” in the eyes of the national majority? How acceptable is the Indian caste system to the “tribals” of Northeast who are completely foreign to the system?

The Problem of Difference

A Mizo, a Naga, a Kuki, or a Khasi, whom anthropologists have been identifying as ethnically conscious “tribals” have one common reason to be. They are historically, racially, culturally, and religiously different from the rest of Indians. In a nation like India where linguistic boundaries determine state boundaries,¹⁹ where social stratification is based on one’s inherent religious “class,” maintenance of one’s distinctive identity has serious socio-political implications. A contemporary theological hermeneutics that seriously takes the problem of difference or otherness as a theoretical approach²⁰ provides a pertinent analytical tool for the studies of marginal identities such as the “tribals”. Hearing the voice of the unprivileged is deemed a theological necessity in this hermeneutics and requires respecting their (the underprivileged’s) otherness. The approach attempts, *inter alia*, to liberate the oppressed from domination

by the powerful.²¹ A popular pattern of domination of the minority by the majority is the process of homogenization. Consciously or unconsciously, the pattern destroys the otherness of the minority by avoiding the issue of difference. Robert Schreiter has prudently suggested five ways by which dominant groups avoid the issue of difference. He says "the 'us'" (1) *homogenize* the other (by ignoring and trivializing the difference in order to dominate the other); it (2) *colonize* the other (assuming the other as an inferior being who has to be raised to our standard); it (3) *demonize* the other (and consider the other as a threat to be expunged); it (4) *romanticise* the other (and project otherness as of exotic nature that does not threaten "the us"); or it (5) *pluralize* the other (so that difference does not really make a difference at all).²²

The Indian national majority's failure to recognize the otherness of the "tribals" and its attempt to erase the difference has been a major factor in the political turmoil of NEI. The ethnopolitics of the "tribals" in the region represents, to a large extent, an attempt to resist the majority's efforts to eradicate their distinctiveness or otherness. Understandably, the degree of difference seems to prevail upon the intensity of political resistance. Here, the role of Christianity in the escalation of the difference and in the intensification of the concomitant sentimental resistance against "non-Christian India" is undeniable. At the psychological level, it is apparent, for instance, that the Mizos who have become Christians feel less at home in India than the Assamese or Meiteis who are Hindus by profession. On the other hand, the efforts of the majority to wipe out the otherness of the tribals as a process of their domination have also been intense. Rakshat Puri's plea "to end the isolation of the tribals and bring them into the social, economic and cultural mainstream of the country"²³ is a good description of such attempts. Paramesh Choudhury even goes to the extent of "discovering" the Indian origin of the Chinese and hopes that "this discovery will crack down the theory that the hilly tribes of Eastern regions are of non-Indian origin which paved the way to a great extent to flare up the fire of secessionist movement."²⁴ The policy of the Government of India does not seem to be blind to such efforts

of domination. There are special provisions in the Constitution to safeguard the minorities,²⁵ but the national majority's propensity towards assimilation is plain and discernible for the "Tribals" of NEI. Assimilation, according to Donald Harowitz,²⁶ may either be "amalgamation" in which two groups form a new group both losing their identities, or "incorporation," in which one group loses its identity by merging into another group which retains its identity. There is no question that the prevailing pattern has been the latter type. Not only are the efforts for "incorporation" apparent, but also its terms and conditions dictated by the majority. M.N. Srinivas and R.D. Sanwal are not conjectural when they say,

Many amongst the regional segment of the national majority not only want the tribal people in NEHA (North-eastern Hill Areas) to be culturally assimilated into Hinduism but also want it to occur on the majority's term, that is, *at the lowest level of the socio-ritual hierarchy.*²⁷

"Tribal" Identity of Christians in NEI:

The role of Christianity in the process of modernizing the NEI "tribals" is paramount. The British policy of minimal spending and intervention in the administration of the hills²⁸ left the missionaries with "the burden" of bringing the "tribals" into the light of the modern world.²⁹ The missionaries reduced the languages to writing, introduced literature and took almost the whole burden of education. In the case of Mizoram, the whole educational responsibility had been vested on the mission agencies from 1904 to 1947. Today, Mizoram has the second highest literacy percentage in the nation.³¹ As a colonial administrator reports, the Colonial Government never spent a significant amount of money on the education of the Mizos. "The progress made," says this administrator, "has been due chiefly to the missions and their own funds, a progress which has placed Lushai [i.e., Mizo] very high up in the standards of literacy."³¹ One might expect that Christianity in the region would be western in character and form, but surprisingly enough, as Mangkhosat Kipgen has rightly asserts, "tribal" Christianity such as the Mizos' is "uniquely indigenous (in) character."³² Christianity in many respects prepares the people

to face the impending modernity by helping to form a new identity. Nevertheless, the new identity—which interweaves the new religion and worldview with traditional identity—faces a political and socio-cultural crisis in the “foreign” worlds of the Indian socio-cultural and political sea. The “tribals” self-image a combination of their ethnic pride and a high estimation of their Christian identity, is in serious conflict with their image in the hearts and minds of their fellow Indians.

The role of the Indian Constitution regarding the status of the so-called “tribals” is quite complex. As said above, it has provisions to protect them along with other minorities, but it also contributes in subjugating the “tribals” of NEI to “the lowest level of the socio-ritual hierarchy” at least in two ways. First, the very choice of the word “tribe” serves as a means of oppression.³³ The English word “tribal”—as well as its root “tribe”—is often a derogatory term. Some people use it as an equivalent to “primitive society.”³⁴ It denotes a “pre-literate” or “pre-industrial” society.³⁵ To cite *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, it refers to “a pre-civilized stage of human society” and “denote(s) emotional, pre-scientific, and irrational behaviour.”³⁶ In a conversation with an African scholar Mercy Amba Oduyoye, I was reminded that the word is *an English word* used to define (in the case of Africa) the marginalized indigenous people by the oppressive powerful English immigrants. Today, many African scholars resent the term, says Oduyoye.³⁷ The choice of this word by the Constitution of India is unfortunate. As the above quotations show, the word “tribal” denotes a *primitive stage* in the development of human society, thus, a *temporary identity*. By adopting it as an official identification, the Constitutional usage are quite incongruous. While the term certainly refers to a pre-literate society, the Constitution of India uses it as a reference to the people, including the Mizos, who are the second most literate community of India.³⁸ Under the category called “Scheduled Tribes,” the Constitution unites a whole cluster of diverse ethnic groups to form a new category. This is an artificial construction comprising diverse racial and cultural representations.³⁹

Secondly, by categorically equating the Scheduled Tribes with the Scheduled Castes, the Constitution not only imposes caste hierarchy on the "tribal" people but also categorized them at the lowest level along with the Scheduled Castes. The "tribals" of NEI resent this "foreign" system and their place in the hierarchy. The popular understanding of Scheduled Castes (or more preferably Dalits) as "outcastes" or "untouchables" is unfortunate. The same image is being imposed on all the "tribals," including those in NEI who knew no casteism. While the country certainly needs to break the social impediments fixed on the Dalits, why should the same predicament be extended to other groups of people?

The conflict between the self-image of the "tribals" and their actual place in the nation's socio-ritual hierarchy is a serious matter. Like any other proud people, "tribals" of NEI do not easily accept defeat and disdain. They are willing to pay high prices to hold on to their pride and independence. But their nature of pride and freedom-loving character have been undermined by the caste-driven social hierarchy of their newly "adopted" nation. In this "new situation," they understood themselves to be displaced racially, culturally, and politically and have become victims of cultural imperialism. They have been accused of rebelling against their own nation while they understood themselves to be hauled into a foreign system. If solutions to the antagonistic relationship between the "tribals" of NEI and the "non-tribal" population of India are to be expected, they will have to come from both sides and largely so from the hearts of Indian majority. In this relationship problem, the blame has so far been laid on the "tribals." Srinivas and Sanwal list some popular blames which they say "only helps in diverting attention from identifying the real factors responsible for weak integration." The list includes the tribals "rebelliousness' (and) 'inherent separatism'," along with "the 'legacy of colonialism', 'conservatism of the tribes', 'ethnic myopia', (and) 'activities of the missionaries'."⁴⁰ This paper is a modest attempt to suggest that the main culpable factors lie outside the "tribal" domain of NEI. While the existing literature implicates these "tribals" for separatism, we ask: Have they ever been accepted as Indian by the heart of India? Are words

like "secessionism" appropriate when the national anthem itself does not include the whole race and region east of "Utkala-Banga" in its vision?

The "Tribal Problem" in the Light of Contemporary Global Reality:

What is often described as the "tribal problem" in India has in some way become a global phenomenon today. At present, the world is undergoing the paradox of multicultural reality. While modern technological communication system has transformed the world into a global village bringing all parts of the world into close proximity, we are just beginning to see the power of ethno-religious identity consciousness in many parts of the world. Charles West has rightly said, "(nationalism and ethnicity) are abstract words, but they refer to the most powerful forces at work in the world today."⁴¹ The expectation of the western liberal humanist tradition to eliminate ethno-based politics through modernity have been proven wrong. Ethno-religious politics have become the order of the day and the movements of such nature are too numerous to be numbered. To list some of the well-known ones, they are: the Hindu-Muslim conflicts, the Serbian-Muslim ethnic wars, the problems in Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, the former USSR, and among many nations in the continent of Africa. In 1994, the WCC, the WARC, and the LWF jointly sponsored a consultation on "Ethnicity and Nationalism" in Colombo (Sri Lanka) and the meeting symbolically accepted the upsurge as a challenge to the ecumenical church. The report of the consultation says that "in more than fifty places around the globe, violence has taken root between people who share the same terrain but differ in ethnicity, race, language, or religion."⁴² The so-called "tribal problem" in India has to be perceived and analyzed in this global context of ethnonationalism. It is true that this new nationalism demands a reformation of the national and international policies, but it primarily calls for a theological undergirding that aims at mutual understanding. The situation needs a globally-informed contextual theology, a theology that emerges from a hermeneutical system which takes the issue of identity,

otherness, and equality seriously.

References

1. R. Vanlawma, *Ka Ram Leh Kei (My Country and I): Political History of Modern Mizoram*, Rev. (Aizwal: M.C. Lalrinthanga, 1989), 191-195.
2. Asoso Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study* (Delhi: Vivek Publishing House, 1974), 176. According to N.K. Das, it was the extremist group within the NNC that declared themselves independent on this day. The movement towards independence gained momentum within the NNC only since the later part of 1949. See N.K. Das, "The Naga Movement," in K.S. Singh, ed., *Tribal Movements in India*, Vol. 1 (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982), 45.
3. According to the 1991 Census Report, 85.73% of the people in Mizoram and 87.47% of the people in Nagaland are Christians while the Christian community in India comprised only 2.32% of the total population. *Census of India 1991*, Series-1, Paper 1 of 1995, *Religion* (Delhi: Controller of Publications, Government of India, 1995), xi, xvi-xvii.
4. Peter Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley & Lond: University of California Press, 1994), 136.
5. "Tenth Business Session (Discussion): Integration and Understanding in the North-east" in *The Tribal Situation in India*, ed. by K.S. Singh (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1972), 620.
6. Phanjoubam Tarapot, *Insurgency Movement in North-Eastern India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing YHouse Pvt. Ltd., 1993), xi.
7. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 197), 261.
8. I borrow this term from Walker Connor for whom nationalism in its pristine sense is integrally related to ethnicity. (See W. Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), xi). This, in my opinion, is how most "tribals" of Northeast India understand their "national" identity. From this perspective, India is a multinational country.
9. The words "tribe" and "tribal" have been used insensitively by anthropologists and sociologists in India due probably to the uncritical use of the terms in the Constitution of India. The terms are quite problematic and will be taken up later. To acknowledge the problem, I use these words with quotation marks throughout the paper.
10. H. Dihingia, *Assam's Struggle Against the British rule (1826-1863)* (New Delhi: Asian Publication Service, 1980), 13.
11. Bangovinda Parampanthi, "Aryanisation and Assimilation of Assam," *National-Buiding and Development in North East India*, ed., Udayaon Misra (Guwahati: Purbanchal Prakash, 1991), 106.
12. N.K. Das, *Ethnic Identity, Ethnicity and Social Stratification in North-East India*, 221, 255.
13. *Ibid.*, 254.
14. Bhagabati, 148.
15. E.g., S.M. Dubey, "Inter-Ethnic Alliance, Tribal Movements and Integration in Northeast India," in *Tribal Movements in India*, vol. 1,

- ed. by K.S. Singh (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1982), 16; S.K. Chaube, "Ethnicity and Political Development in North-East India," in *Tribal Development in India: Problems and Prospects*, ed. by B. Chaudhury (Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1982), 144.
16. N.K. Das, *Ethnic Identity, Ethnicity and Social Stratification in North-East India*, 245. N. Nibedon uses "ethnic explosion" as the title of his book *North East India: The Ethnic Explosion* (New Delhi: The Lancers Publishers, 1981).
 17. For studies on the word "Mizo", see B. Lalhangliana, "Mizo," and J.N. Phukan, "The Late Home of Migration of the Mizos," in *Studies on the Minority Nationalities of Northeast India-The Mizos: Seminar Papers*, ed. by J.V. Hluna et. al., (Aizaw: Directorate of Higher & Technical Education, 1992), 6-7, 8-11. For the word "Naga" see m.Horam, *Naga Polity* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1975), 21-26.
 18. E.g. N.K. Das, *Ethnic Identity, Ethnicity and Social Stratification in North East India*: B.K. Roy Burman, "Crisis of Identity among Mizos," in *Tribal Transformation in India*, Vol. 3, *Ethnopolitics and Identity Crisis*, ed. by B. Chaudhuri (New Delhi: Iner-India Publications, 1992), 534-549; B.B. Goswami, *Mizo Unrest* (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1979); P.R.G. Mathur, "The Khasi Solidarity Movement," In *Tribal Movement in India*, vol. 1, ed. by K.S. Singh (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1982), 181-202; *inter alia*.
 19. Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (BASIC Books, 1973), 255. Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Practice* (New Delhi and London: Sage Publications, 1991), 118f.
 20. This hermeneutical approach is discussed and applied in a number of theological literature. See, *inter alia*, Paul Knitter, "Toward a Liberative Interreligious Dialogue," *Cross Currents* 45 (no. 4, 1995-96): 451-468; Jonathan Z. Smith, "What A Difference A Difference Makes," in *To See Ourselves As Others See Us*: Christian, Jew, "Others" in Late Antiquity, ed. by Jacob Neusner, et. al. (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985); David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987); Mark Kline Taylor, *Remembering Esperanza: A Cultural-Political Theology of North American Praxis* (New York: Orbis, 1990).
 21. Knitter, 462-466; Tracy, 79.
 22. Robert Schreiter, "Teaching Theology from an Intercultural Perspective," *Theological Education* 24 (1989): 19.
 23. Rakshat Puri, "Towards Security in the North-East: Transportation and Nationalism," in *Tribal Situation in India*, ed. by K.S. Singh (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1986), 105.
 24. P. Chaudhury, *Indian Origin of the Chinese Nation*, Part II (Calcutta: Das Gupta & Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1991), 9.
 25. Articles 12-30 (on Fundamental Rights) and 330-342 (Special Provision Relating to Certain Classes).
 26. "Ethnic Identity," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), 115.

27. M.N. Srinivas and r.D. Sanwal, "Some Aspects of Political Development in the North-eastern Hill Areas of India," in *Tribal Situation in India*, 121 Emphasis is mine. This sympathetic view receives a strong criticism from a renowned Indian anthropologist G.S. Ghurye. See Ghurye's *The Burning Caldron of North-East Indian* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1980).
28. See M. Horam, 13; Animesh Ray, *Mizoram Dyanmics of Change* (Calcutta: Pearl Publishers, 1982), 15f. *inter alia*.
29. It may not be easy to distinguish "the light of the modern world" from "the light of the Gospel" for many missionaries of the 19th century.
30. 81.23% in the 1991 Census Report. See Amulya Ratna Nanda, Registrar Generla and Census Commissionner, India, *Census of India 1991, Series 1, Paper 1, Provisional Population Totals* (Government of India, 1991), 62.
31. Major A.P. G. McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd., 1949, repr., 1977), 203.
32. M. Kipgen, "The Growth of Christianity in Mizoram from 1894 to 1954" (D. Th. diss., The Senate of Serampore College, 1992), 5.
33. One may perhaps argue that the adoption of the term by the Cnstitutionof India has largely taper off the pejorative connotation in the Indian understanding. This argument may be particulrly strong among Indian Christians where "tribal theology" has becomea household name. However, the insensitiveness of the term "tribe" (or "tribal") in its derogatory sene continues even among Indian Christian scholars. For example, Stanley. Samartha, a prominent Indian theologian, describes the secodn world war as "the tribal quarrels of Europe." See his *One christ—Many Religipous: Toward A Revised Christology* (Bangalore: South Asia Theological Research Institute, 1992), 1.
34. Max Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), xi.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Gordon Marshall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), s.v. "tribe, tribalism," emphasis mine. Marshall attributes the derogatory use of the term to Sir Henry Maine.
37. Prof. Mercy A. Oduyoye, interview by author, Transcript, Princeton, new Jersey, 4 April, 1995.
38. A similar complaint of using the term "tibal" is made by B.H. Farmer in *An Inroduction to South Asia*, 2nd ed. (new York & London: Routledge, 1993), 13.
39. For a detail descriptions of the gorup, see K.S. Singh, *The Scheduled Tribes* (New Delhi, Oxford, *et. al.*, Oxford University Press, 1994).
40. Srinivas and Sanwal, 119.
41. Charles West, "Nationalism and Ethnicity," *Religion in Eastern Europe* 35 (1995), 1.
42. "Ethnicity and Nationalism: A Challenge to the Churches," *The Ecumenical Reivew* 47 (April, 1995), 225-31.