



**The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies**  
and  
**The University of Wales**

**A Study of the Relation between Christianity and Khasi-Jaintia Culture, 1899-1969 with particular reference to the Theology and Practice of the Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian Church**

PhD, Ladder Myllemngap

**1998**

**The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies**

[www.ocms.ac.uk](http://www.ocms.ac.uk)

# **A Study of the Relation between Christianity and Khasi-Jaintia Culture, 1899 - 1969 with particular reference to the Theology and Practice of the Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian Church**

PhD Thesis, Ladder Myllemngap, 1998

## **Abstract**

Even before the coming of Christianity in Khasi-Jaintia Hills, the Khasi people had a well established culture, well maintained religion, and well established administrative set up at which the Europeans were not only surprised but amazed. Prior to annexation under the British administration the Khasi-Jaintia Hills were ruled by independent Chiefs, and the region was divided into petty-states comprised of thirty Chiefs and twelve Dollois. The Khasi lived in isolation and were not known to the outside world. Being isolated geographically, the Khasi did not have interaction with other cultures. When the British took over the administration, the Khasi chiefdoms lost their independence, and some aspects of Khasi culture were affected. When Christianity came the Khasi culture was bound to be affected because Christianity intervened directly with the traditional culture.

The spread of Christian faith became a threat to the traditional culture, and as a result Christianity had to engage with the local culture. The orthodox Khasi perceived that the indigenous religion was in danger because of growing influence of Christian faith that termed Khasi religion 'demonic' and barred the Khasi Christians from participating in the traditional religious practices and cultural festivities because they were believed to have religious connotation.

The Welsh Mission did not disturb non-religious aspects of culture such as matriliney, 'Ka tipkur-tipkha', marriage and the law of inheritance, but condemned the traditional religion which eventually resulted in marginalizing the culture. The negative attitude caused cultural instability in the Khasi society.

The establishment of 'Ka Seng Khasi' was in fact the outcome of the negative attitude of the missionaries. When Ka Seng Khasi came into being, its main purpose was 'to combat Christian faith'. Ka Seng Khasi then accused the missionaries as 'destroyers of Khasi culture', and accused the Khasi Christians as 'puppets of the missionaries' because the Khasi converts refrained from participating in the cultural activities. It then raised the issue of 'cultural identity' for Khasi Christians. It argued that religion and culture are inseparable. The Welsh missionaries separated religion and culture which resulted in creating a sense of cultural instability. As an anti-Christian Organization Ka Seng Khasi challenged the validity and belief of Christian faith. In order to preserve the identity of the Khasis, Ka Seng Khasi pushed the missionaries and the Khasi church to address the issue of culture because it saw the danger of the hegemonic cultures and Western Christianity which had been the only faith successfully to make inroads into the culture.