

The uprising: colonial state, Christian missionaries, and anti-slavery movement in North-East India (1908-1954)

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Abstrak

In 1908, a Welsh Doctor named Peter Fraser turned down a lucrative job with the Kings Government in London and instead wore the robes of a Christian missionary to travel to the remote Lushai Hills of north-east India-the habitat of a reportedly wild, headhunting tribal people. Fraser not only found acceptance among the tribals, but also came in conflict with the colonial state over the tribal practice of bawi, a practice he found akin to slavery. This clash was symptomatic of a larger issue that marked colonialism in south Asia: the tussle between the colonial administration and the missionary institutions. Challenging the notion of a monolithic colonial experience, The Uprising chronicles this struggle which witnessed Fraser, after being expelled by his own mission, petitioning and lobbying for the issue in the British Parliament through the Anti-Slavery Society and even taking the issue to the League of Nations to make an intervention which had lasting impact on the lives and history of the Lushai people (Mizo tribe). Writing in a narrative form, the book brings out the immense historical significance of the contradictions between the colonial state and the missionary institutions, and argues that neither institution, contrary to popular perception, was a liberating agency.