

## **Conversions and Transformations: Missiological Approaches to Religious Change**

### **A Missiological Approach to the Religious Conversions of Southeast Asia**

#### **A Historical Study of Religious Changes in Myanmar, Thailand, Lao & Cambodia**

The religious conversions of Southeast Asian nations in their cultural heritages need to be systematically examined. Various indigenous peoples of the region have different primal religions and cultures even though they have been sharing the same geographic area. The purpose of this study is to describe and understand the characteristics of the primal religions of the region and in order to understand the nature of the religious conversion in the region. What is herewith interesting is the process of various kinds of conversions had been happening among the different tribal peoples through religious assimilation.

The present study will trace the historical backgrounds of the cultural heritages in the region. We shall see how the peoples of the region assimilated beliefs and cultures of Indian religious systems. The present study aims to investigate in the history of cross-cultural religious conversions and assimilations of the Indian religious traditions, notably Hinduism and later Buddhism, into the region of Indo-China peninsula. Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia share together Ramayana cultural tradition in common with a heavy Indian influenced civilization. Myanmar and other places had a unique process of Indianization, first under the influence of Hinduism (Ramayana tradition) followed by the Buddhist influence later. Both Hinduism and Buddhism originated from India; Myanmar and other places have been under religious and cultural influence from both religions subsequently. The present study argues that religious conversions take place from one primal religious cognition to another

religious cognition through cultural assimilation.