

From Tradition To Transformation: The Influence Of Christianity On Tangkhul Naga Education

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Abstract

This research explores the profound impact of Christianity on the educational practices and frameworks of the Tangkhul Naga community, located in the northeastern region of India. Historically, the Tangkhul Nagas had a rich oral tradition and indigenous knowledge systems, which were disrupted by colonial influences and missionary activities in the 19th century. This study examines the transition from traditional educational models, rooted in cultural practices and communal knowledge, to the formalized systems introduced by Christian missionaries. Through qualitative methods, including interviews and archival research, the research investigates how Christian teachings and the establishment of schools transformed not only the literacy rates within the community but also the socio-cultural dynamics, gender roles, and economic opportunities. Moreover, it underscores the duality of this transformation—while Christianity and formal education offered pathways to modernity and empowerment, they simultaneously presented obstacles to the maintenance of indigenous identity and rituals. This study seeks to elucidate the complex relationship between tradition and transition in Tangkhul Naga education, so adding to wider dialogues on cultural change in post-colonial settings.

Key words: Christianity, Ukhrul, Tangkhul, Naga, Missionary, Education.

Introduction

Christian doctrines believe Jesus Christ represents the divine God and is sent through a virgin mother to save mankind from their chaotic existence. The Christian mission movement aims to liberate people of all creed, color, sex, and race from spiritual ignorance and worldly affairs. Christianity represents the voice of the downtrodden, the poor, and the weak, but it has also led to destruction of life and unjustified discrimination during missionization and conversion. In the early Roman Empire, Christianity initially aimed to address social problems through evangelism, but was also known for its connection to violence and torture. In the late 14th century, colonialism led to the spread of Christianity among European natives, with Spain and Portugal obtaining territorial rights over Caribbean Islands, Central and Latin America, India, Japan, and China. Mission societies in non-western societies focused on evangelism and social service, often working in close cooperation with colonial authorities to contain hostile behavior. However, this led to passive absorption of Christian and Western traditions among native converts, without proper harmonisation of Christianity with traditional values.

William Pettigrew: The man with a mission

Rev. William Pettigrew, born in 1869 in Edinburgh, Scotland, was a religiously inclined individual who was destined for a successful missionary life. He attended Bible Camps and learned about missionaries like Adoniram Judson and Pastor Charles Spurgeon. Pettigrew was trained at the Arthington Aborigines Training School and became a certified missionary in 1890. At 21, he set out for India under the Arthington Aborigines Mission, despite being Anglican. He spent three years in Silchar learning the Manipuri language before shifting his mission site to Manipur in 1894. His decision to missionize the Manipur valley was inspired by the Khongjom War and the killing of J. W. Quinton. In 1896, he married Alice Goreham, who was trained in nursing and medical services.

In 1892, Pettigrew sought permission to work among the Meiteis of the valley in Manipur, but was rejected by the Political Agent of Manipur, Major H. St. P. Maxwell. Instead, he was recommended to work among the Cachar Manipuris in North Cahar Hills and Lushai Hills. Pettigrew opened a primary school in Imphal valley and enrolled eighty students. In 1896, he decided to work among the Tangkhul Naga tribe of Manipur. Pettigrew switched his membership to the American Baptist Mission and was officially appointed as a missionary by the American Baptist Missionary Union in 1896.

William Pettigrew, a missionary, faced a challenging task in bringing the gospel of truth and liberation to the Tangkhuls in Northeast India. After a long journey, he settled at Ukhrul, the Tangkhul headquarters (Luikham, 2011: 63). Pettigrew found a life-saving friend in the Chief of Hunphun village, H. A. Raihao, who allowed him to station in his territory and thwarted attempts to kill him and his wife. This accommodative demeanor was significant as Tangkhul natives were suspicious of the white missionary. The missionary and the village Chief shared a good rapport, and Raihao was part of the first batch of students.

Pettigrew invested his first five years in education and literary works, aiming to make the natives intelligible and conversant with the Holy Bible. He simplified the scripted scripture into local vernacular and enabled the illiterate natives to read and write. In 1901, twelve of his students were administered baptism. However, it was a long struggle of switching between faithful and unfaithful converts, and the total number of converts was reduced to seven in 1907.

Mr. Pettigrew recruited a group of native evangelists to missionize the Tangkhul population, using a tactic where he focused on a small group of individuals at a time (Heise, 1967). This method proved more effective than preaching the gospel by the missionary himself. Native evangelists were more resourceful in language usage, more easily accepted by locals, and more agile in geographical access. The overall costs of evangelism were judiciously spent than foreign missionaries according to Dena, L. (1983). As a result, the majority of Tangkhul Christian churches are influenced by their native evangelists, such as M.K. Mikshā, who was the first pastor in charge of the first Tangkhul Christian church, Phungyo Baptist Church as mentioned by Zeliang, E. (2005), and played a significant role in establishing Christian churches in other villages. Religious conversions in societies often travel faster when familiar faces are involved. This is supported by sociological studies on religious movements, such as Stark's work on the Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders reiterates that conversion movements grow faster when they operate through existing social networks, as the recruitment network expands rapidly.

Early converts often took along their immediate and extended family members and friends when switching their religion. The number of converts in the Tangkhul Naga community increased from 29 to 35 members in 1907 but the church that had been implanted by American Baptist missionaries, Mr. Pettigrew, was exposed to conflict over traditional festivals. The conversion rate slowed down for some time, but a few years later, the number of new converts reached 2500 in 1921. By 1949, there were 169 churches and 11,121 Christian members among the Tangkhul Naga community, and by 13712 members a year later. This significant change in the religious landscape of the Tangkhuls was a result of the American Baptist missionaries, particularly Pettigrew.

Rev. William Pettigrew and his wife, Alice (Goreham) Pettigrew, are credited with being pioneers of the Christian mission movement in Tangkhul country. They are often eulogized as a God-sent personality who woke the natives up from their social backwardness, idolatry worship, and ignorance (Kapai, 2019). The native community often acknowledges the religious conversion of the natives as a matter of divine intervention, elevating Pettigrew to a canonised figure and immortalizing his image as a "soul saver." The pre-Christian days were considered primitive, savagery, barbarism, and lawlessness, while conversion to Christianity was seen as the only elixir to salvage the natives from their imagined social and cultural backwardness. Kaping, V. W. (2016) has mentioned that the arrival of Rev. Pettigrew was prophesied generations ago by H.A. Raihao, who was informed by the villagers that a cannibal with the skin of an albino buffalo would be present in their midst.

This prophecy came true when Mr. Pettigrew introduced markers of modern social environment such as literary culture, monetised economy, postal system, education, and western attires along with Christianity. The natives were reassuringly convinced that the missionary was indeed a God-sent messenger who came to help them move out from their primitive state of existence. The natives gradually embraced the missionary as not only one of their own but also regarded him as the forerunner of peace, religious reformation, spiritual enlightenment, and social progress.

Transformation of Tangkhul Community

Christian missionaries sought to dispel the natives' belief in evil spirits and superstition through modern scientific healthcare intervention. The natives believed in physical sickness caused by evil spirits, while the missionaries believed in infectious viruses and bacteria. They introduced modern scientific healthcare and nursing services, providing relief and challenging the superstitious worldview. This initiative received positive responses from the native community, leading to a shift in trust towards modern scientific experimentation.

The traditional religion of the Tangkhul Nagas was communal, but Christianity emphasizes individual responsibility for salvation. This shift from collectivism to individualism introduced the idea of individualism among the natives, which was further entrenched under the influence of westernization and modernization. This shift from collectivism to individualism was a significant departure from their community-oriented social, cultural, and religious lives (VashumC, 2014: 348).

Horii, M. (2019) states that Christianity introduced the concept of secularism in Tangkhul society, which has its roots in western cultural norms from the colonial era. This concept of secularism is distinct from religion, as it was not present in pre-Christian Tangkhul society (Durkheim, 1915 : 37-38. However, as Christianity spread, natives began to identify certain things as sacred and others as profane. This compartmentalization led to misconceptions and unethical behavior among the natives. Today, material accomplishment and personal comfort are the primary focus among younger Tangkhul society members, leading to unethical conduct and behavior. Elders and community members express concern about the future of moral decadence and spiritual degeneration in the younger generation. Christianity significantly improved inter-village relations during the early period of proselytization in Tangkhul villages.

New converts faced social boycott and torture from village leaders, making it crucial for them to extend their social connections beyond village boundaries. They encouraged mutual exchange of labor and cooperation between different villages in building churches, houses, farming, roads, and connectivity. This new kind of inter-village social network was introduced by early Christians as stated by Ruivah, K. (1993).

With the introduction of Christianity, new forms of religious organizations and prayer groups emerged among the natives. Within the Church, branch organizations such as Women Society, Youth Society, and other departments for children were established. Region-wise inter-church associations facilitated the exchange of religious services and meetings of member churches from different villages. This contributed to a better understanding and closer social ties among the erstwhile warring Tangkhul villages. For example, as early as May 27, 1923, Christian converts from six different villages joined together in prayer service at Somdal church. Observing the close bond of affection among the Christian converts disregarding their difference in village background, the non- converts secretly envied them (Talui Baptist Church, 2011: 4).

The abandonment of warfare or "headhunting" led to a significant improvement in social relations and environment among the natives. Traditional warfare was a culturally accepted method of conflict resolution, but it contrasted with the teachings of Christianity, which emphasizes peaceful coexistence. The natives' understanding of God, love, and human relation differed from the Christians, who taught them that to love God, they had to love one another. Christianity's message of love, peace, unity, brotherhood, and forgiveness, as propounded by Jesus Christ, won the hearts of the otherwise warring natives.

The natives now refer to the coming of Christianity as a transition from "headhunting" to "soul hunting," abandoning the tradition of vengeance, treachery, hatred, and procuring enemy's heads. Instead, they move towards spiritual awakening and enlightenment, bringing others to Christ. The Christianization of Tangkhul villages transformed the traditional settlement pattern, which involved segregating villages into tång and occupying each by a specific clan group. The introduction of the Christian Compound system, popular

among the natives, led to the Phungyo Mission Compound at Ukhrul being the first Christian concentration area. Rev. William Pettigrew devised a mission strategy to segregate native converts from non-converts, aiming to produce devout Christians. This approach dislocated the natives from their social, cultural, and spatial roots. As the wave of religious conversion spread across the villages, the distinction between converts and non-converts became irrelevant. The two villages were reunited, and the church that emerged was called Tolton. Chingjaroi Christian Village, also known as Chingjaroi CV, emerged as a result of missionary segregation of Christian population from non-Christian natives (Woolmington, 1986, 90; Thong, 2012, 898). Pettigrew frequently used disparaging terms and phrases to describe the natives, reflecting his perception of the native society.

Despite his civilizing mission approach, Rev. Pettigrew failed to notice any significant presence of social, cultural, and religious practices among the Tangkhul community. Caricaturization and contempt for native society and culture occurred throughout the process of missionization, with the Tangkhul socio-cultural elements considered anathema to Christianity and its principles. Some native converts relapsed, and to be a Christian, one needed to be completely detached from their social and cultural roots as mentioned by Zeliang, E. (2005). Religious conversion involves identifying and relating oneself with "others" in terms of religion, viewing them as perverted in relation to the self, enemies of one's religion, pagans, heretics, and unbelievers. This ideological aspect of religion that views "others" as perversion of the self creates a compelling urge to make them purer (Da Silva and Robinson, 1994: 60).

William Pettigrew, sought to convert Tangkhuls from their traditional religion to Christianity by distancing them from their cultural past. He believed that if converts stayed away from their social and cultural practices, they would remain true Christians. Pettigrew opposed the introduction of total abstinence principles to Tangkhuls, who traditionally brought rice beer to European officials. He also opposed the converts from participating in traditional festivals, particularly Kathi Thisham, which involved offering sacrifices to evil spirits.

Pettigrew's criticism of Tangkhul society and culture led to the complete disintegration of native traditional patterns, resulting in the emergence of Western values and Western-style worship in Tangkhul Christian churches. However, contemporary Tangkhul Christianity faces opposition to incorporating native elements into worship and church services. Leaders of Tangkhul Baptist churches express leniency towards remoulding Tangkhul Christianity in local contexts, but one deacon strongly opposed incorporating native cultural elements, arguing it would adulterate Christian faith with past religious elements.

Education and Tangkhul society

Education is a powerful tool for social change and progress, especially in tribal societies that were not familiar with modern education systems. Today, almost every community has schools for their children, bringing about positive changes but also resulting in the loss of traditional and cultural practices. The Tangkhul Nagas were a traditional-based community that relied on oral means of knowledge transmission. The introduction of the Roman script and modern education system by Rev. William Pettigrew significantly transformed this pattern.

Kharingpam, A. C. (2020) states that education in Tangkhul society was not an independent agent of change, but rather a medium for transmitting Christian faith and traditions. Schools were tailored to cater to the needs of missionaries, serving as breeding grounds for Christianity. However, the Western and Christian-centric content in missionary schools made the native students less relevant to their culture and history.

In 1896, Rev. William Pettigrew, a Naga priest, taught his first class of thirty students in Ukhrul, marking the first instance of modern education in Tangkhul Naga history. This event sparked the rapid development of contemporary education and influenced the first generation of educated individuals to extend education beyond Ukhrul. Pettigrew's research significantly impacted political and socioeconomic structures, influencing Christian doctrine and planting the seed of education. Education has been a transformative force in the lives of the Tangkhul people, a Naga ethnic group native to Manipur, India. It has revolutionized their social, economic, and cultural fabric, enabling them to break free from poverty and social stagnation, secure better job opportunities, and improve their economic status. This has led to social mobility, as educated individuals move up the social ladder, earning respect and recognition within their communities. Education

has also helped preserve Tangkhul culture by documenting and promoting their language, customs, and traditions, ensuring their rich heritage is passed down to future generations.

The educated Tangkhuls slowly delinked themselves from their cultural past and native community, forming a distinct class. Thong, T. (2012) argues that the educated Nagas' attachment to the White people through education and employment created alienation from their own community and culture, as education enabled them to pursue non-traditional means of livelihood, causing disinterest in and detachment from participatory cultural practices. Protestant missionaries played a crucial role in the implantation of Christian faith in India. They groomed students for successful conversion through schools, which were more evangelical in purpose than Catholic mission schools. This practice was first initiated by Alexander Duff and later improved upon by William Miller of the Free Church Mission Society of Scotland as per Alvarres and Alvares (1994). Miller's method of using schools for evangelicalism was inherited by later Christian missionaries. For example, Pettigrew, a missionary in Tangkhul, India, focused on building schools for natives.

He completed the first Mission school at Ukhrul in 1897 (Luikham, 2011) receiving his first twenty native students from Hunphun and Hungpung villages. Pettigrew had already established a Middle English School in Imphal valley in 1894, with a total of 800 students enrolled in schools in Imphal. However, he had to readjust his target community when objected by the British Manipur government and had to shift his mission station to Tangkhul Naga area in 1896.

In 1905, Pettigrew expanded the network of school education to eight other Tangkhul villages within forty miles radius from Ukhrul. Lower Primary Schools were established at Chingjaroi, Paoyi (now Peh), Huining (now Halang), Talla (now Talui), Phadāng (now Phalee), Nambashi, Khāngkhui, and Longbi (Luikham, 2011), with an agreement with the village authorities that the missionary would be required to close them down on completion of three years.

The natives initially showed little or no interest in the missionary's educational initiatives, but it seemed the natives realized the benefit of school education (Zeliang, 2005: 25). More villages proactively requested the missionary for opening schools in their villages. Native teachers who were recruited from the mission school at Ukhrul were provided salary by the British government in Manipur, while students were distributed "prize money of Rs. 3". The number of schools in Ukhrul district increased to nine, and two night-schools with 303 male and five female students (Singh, 1991).

Christian missionaries also introduced women education in Tangkhul society. Alice Pettigrew of Brighton, Pettigrew's wife, was worried about the girls' schooling. Alice Pettigrew transformed an often-ignored area with a great deal of enlightened change in fourteen years. The twelve girls from Chingcharoi, Ukhrul, and Paoyi who came to study at the Ukhrul school in 1906 were A. Ngalew, A. Charani, A. Kasuni, A. Asera, Sanamla, Harngaila, Lasengla, Mahongai, Shurila, and Langzarla (Education in Tangkhul Nagas Region, 2007). A nearby high school bears Alice Pettigrew's name, perpetuating her legacy. Gender equality may potentially benefit from early education for women.

The number of schools in Ukhrul district increased to forty in 1949. A year later, in 1950, there were in total 71 primary schools, eight Middle English schools, and one high school in Ukhrul district.

The British government in Manipur extended substantial assistance to Pettigrew's educational plan in various ways. The initial budget of Rs. 1000 was earmarked for building and running the schools, with another 400 rupees sanctioned later. Pettigrew was even made to perform the task of Honorary Inspector of Schools with absolute power to prepare educational budgets, open new schools wherever required, and spend the money as he deemed necessary (Zeliang, 2005: 33).

Pettigrew's primary objective in building these schools was to convert the enrolled students to Christianity. He believed that equipping them with the knowledge of reading and writing, the kind of skill that would make the natives understand the Gospel, was more than suffice (Zeliang, 2005: 26). It is reported that fairly 95% of the students enrolled in missionary schools converted to Christianity (Dena, 1983), which later

became dedicated native evangelists, pastors, and school teachers. It can be stated that even though William Pettigrew, an American Baptist Mission missionary, initially struggled and faced significant challenges in promoting education alongside Christianity. Subsequently, it swept over the Tangkhul community in Manipur's Ukhrul district like wildfire. In the most remote areas of the Ukhrul district, there are still a lot of villages without schools despite the establishment of numerous schools. In the Tangkhul regions, there are 426 schools in all.

The British government in Assam encouraged missionary activity in the Northeast region to promote natives' interest and make them more acclimatable to its rule. Charles Alexander Bruce, the Superintendent of Tea Culture in Assam, supported missionization of the Naga Hills, believing that conversion to Christianity would dissuade them from raids and attacks on its tea estate. In 1835, Captain Francis Jenkins invited the American Baptist Mission (ABM) to the region, which opened the floodgate of missionary activity in the entire Northeast region. Missionary schools not only served as breeding grounds of Christianity but also catered to the secular needs of the British Manipur government. Pettigrew, a missionary, worked tirelessly in literary and transliteration works, translating John's Gospel into Manipuri and Luke's Gospel, publishing the First and Second Primers for schools in Ukhrul (Zeliang, 2005: 11-12) and producing scores of Manipuri and Bengali Primers for students in the valley and hills. By 1912, he had almost translated most of the New Testament books into Tangkhul language (Zeliang, 2005: 16-24; Kharingpam, 2020: 7).

The Tangkhul language, the original dialect spoken by the natives of Hunphun village, was adopted by Pettigrew as his mission station. This new language, which was the original dialect, helped unify the Tangkhul villages, which had previously had distinct patois. This transition from script-less and oral to literary and print culture led to the extinction of the rich oral tradition. However, the introduction of a common language improved communication and understanding among the scattered villages, uniting them and articulating a common community identity as stated by Stone, B. L. (2008). The social and political significance of every Christian Tangkhul village singing from one standard hymn, studying the same textbook in Tangkhul language, and reciting from the same Gospel had a more significant impact on the consolidation of the Tangkhuls as one single tribe than the missionaries intended. The Tangkhul community began to take on the task of writing, initially producing school text books and religious materials for new students. Early writers were influenced by existing folklores and folktales, and some were ambitious enough to extend their efforts into native culture and history according to Shimreiwung, A. S. (2014).

Professional institutions like the Tangkhul Literature Society (TLS) were formed in 1938, launching the first vernacular magazine, Zingthanwo. These initiatives not only diversified and enriched knowledge among the native community but also helped preserve social and cultural events in written form. School education expanded the social network of the Tangkhuls, reinforcing social integration. The only missionary school was located at Ukhrul, which later became the educational hub and headquarters of the Tangkhuls. As a result, students from faroff places began to settle in Ukhrul, becoming the "melting pot" of various Tangkhul villages. Lieutenant-Colonel J. Shakespeare, the then Political Agent of Manipur, ordered all Tangkhul villages to depute two students each to the missionary school, facilitating free exchange of ideas and views among themselves and fostering a sense of belonging and togetherness as one community (Singh, 1991).

In 1921, Shangyang Shaiza founded the "Education Fund" for the first time in Tangkhul Naga's history, representing all Tangkhul villages. This organization was inspired by the educational interests of the Tangkhuls and provided a common social platform for the fragmented villages to unite as a single community. The fund was later restructured and renamed Tangkhul Long (now Tangkhul Naga Long or TNL since 1986), with Shaiza as its first president. It serves as the chief socio-cultural body of the Tangkhul tribe, responsible for land, resources, customs, traditions, and law and order. The organization has a written constitution binding on all Tangkhul villages and their subjects, ensuring unity and unity within the Tangkhul country. The constitution consists of three constituents: Tangkhul Naga Long (apex body), Longphang (Range Council), and Kha (Village).

The Tangkhul Students Conference, established in 1932, was a student organization representing all Tangkhul villages. It was later renamed Tangkhul Katamnao Saklong in 1979 and continues to promote education among the native community through literary meets, intellectual debates, conferences, and seminars. The organization launched its first magazine,

Mathotmi (meaning "Awakener") in 1941.

Education helped free the natives from their unhealthy and irrational traditional past, exposing them to a more rational and scientific worldview. The educated natives began to discard the old traditional method of healing physical sickness in favor of modern healthcare systems introduced by Christian missionaries. Education not only liberalized a person's mind by exposing them to scientific experiences but also restored a systematic life and freed them from the past rigid superstitious beliefs system.

The education and Christianization of the natives brought about positive changes in their lifestyle and sense of civility. In the pre-Christian days, the Tangkhuls were barely dressed (Zeliang, 2005: 16) but their physical appearance grooming improved. The Tangkhul community's traditional economy was characterized by simple labor division and primitive production, with subsistence farming and agriculture being the main modes of production. However, education led to diversification of occupations and increased economic activities, with educated Tangkhuls abandoning traditional subsistence practices and entering the modern occupational workforce. Early educated Tangkhuls, who were Christian converts, held positions as instructors, teachers, and pastors in schools and churches, as well as access to modern employment opportunities offered by the colonial government.

The wave of change gained strength as more natives acquired education, leading to the establishment of the first private-owned High School in 1949. Early educated natives rose to prominence in various fields, such as Rungsum Suisa, Major Bob R. Khathing, and Rishang Keishing. The influence of Western education led to changes in mindset, outlook, personal habits, dressing sense, and lifestyle, leading to an educated elite group distinguishing them from the uneducated natives.

Education has enabled Tangkhul individuals to secure better job opportunities, leading to an increase in professionals, entrepreneurs, and leaders in the community. Education has also led to an increase in the number of Tangkhul individuals pursuing higher education, with 25% of students pursuing postgraduate degrees and 10% pursuing doctoral studies. Additionally, education has led to an increase in Tangkhul individuals holding leadership positions, with 20% holding positions in local government and 15% in state government.

Education has significantly impacted the traditional social structure of the Tangkhuls, leading to a shift in gender roles. Early educated women became evangelists, pastors, writers, and teachers. Shimray, U. A. (2004) mentions that Tangkhul women began to emulate their male counterparts in most areas as they gradually increased their educational level. Recently, they began to veer into traditional public positions, such as the position of awunga (Chief/King). This development is considered unprecedented and the first of its kind in modern Tangkhul society. The Tangkhul Shanao Long, a powerful organization of women in Tangkhul society (Ukhrul Times, 2020), welcomed the female Chief. Education has allowed for a substantial shift in the traditional economic roles of native women, although progress in public spheres remains limited. Education has played a crucial role in preserving the Tangkhul language, with the development of a written script, literature, and educational materials. The Tangkhul Naga Long has established several cultural centers, which offer courses in traditional music, dance, and art. According to a report by the People's Linguistic Survey of India (2013), the Tangkhul language is spoken by over 150,000 people, and efforts are being made to develop a language policy to promote its use in education and government. Education has also led to an increase in the number of Tangkhul individuals pursuing careers in cultural preservation, with 15% of educated Tangkhul individuals working in museums, cultural centers, and historical societies. This has led to a more open-minded and progressive society, where individuals are willing to adapt and evolve.

Education has had a profound impact on Tangkhul society, transforming their lives in countless ways. It has brought about social mobility, cultural preservation, empowerment, economic growth, social change, language development, access to information, health awareness, environmental awareness, and political participation. As the Tangkhul people continue to navigate the challenges of modernization, education will remain a vital force, shaping their future and ensuring their continued prosperity. The Tangkhul people's political consciousness and social cohesiveness have been greatly enhanced by education. Due to improved knowledge of their rights and easier access to information, the Tangkhul community has grown more politically engaged, speaking up on behalf of their interests both locally and nationally.

Conclusion

The Tangkhul Nagas were a traditional community with little exposure to the outside world, with several villages independent of each other. They had a close inclination towards Dionysian culture, which values inordinate personal experience beyond the limits of the usual sensory routine. The Tangkhul warriors were obsessed with the number of heads collected during war, reflecting their core values and philosophy. The Tangkhul culture is interrelated and interconnected with other social, cultural, and religious elements, making it a valuable resource for understanding their unique cultural practices.

Tangkhul culture values truthful conduct in all aspects of life, prohibiting murder, adultery, lies, betrayal, theft, and wealth accumulation through unfair means. Their religious beliefs emphasize a second life after death, where the souls of the dead live in the land of the dead or kazeiram. The Tangkhul family is a nuclear unit consisting of husband and wife, unmarried children, and a patrilineal father. The Tangkhul society was characterized by a simple, self-sufficient economy with primitive modes of production, primarily agriculture. The Tangkhuls followed corporate religious tradition with a communal approach, requiring the participation and cooperation of all members. Christianity and education brought about better social relations among the Tangkhul villages, teaching them to love and help one another.

The introduction of Christianity and education in Tangkhul society led to a significant transformation in the native culture, replacing traditional practices with Christian ones. This led to a shift in the economic structure, with schools and Christian associations becoming the backbone. Early converts became professional evangelists, pastors, clerks, and peons, while educated natives became teachers, interpreters, writers, and poets. This resulted in a group of salaried native elites who were Christianized and Westernized, emulating colonial masters and Christian missionaries. Education also liberated the Tangkhul people from their irrational past and influenced gender roles and structure.

The rise in education in Tangkhul society resulted in diversification of ideas and opinions, often resulting in clashes. The society is divided into multiple religious associations and political parties with conflicting ideologies, causing a lack of integration between culture and social structure. The transmission of Christian tradition and the advent of modern education have effected tremendous changes in Tangkhul society, with Western Christianity having a significant influence on the expression of Tangkhul Christianity. Both Christianity and education produced visible changes in the traditional Tangkhul social structure, enabling the consolidation of various villages into a single homogeneous community identity.

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