CHAPTER VI

IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY

In Tangkhul society, changes are seen at various levels - at the personal or individual level, at societal level and at the level of tribe as a whole. The separation among these three levels is artificial, in everyday life they are constantly mingling.

6.1 Personal level/ Individual level

The personal testimonies collected during my fieldwork suggest a range of factors that have influenced conversion amongst the Tangkhul. The greatest reason for people converting to Christianity was the assurance and hope of salvation, which Christianity gave them. Furthermore adopting Christianity kept them away from ritualistic demands of Hau involving “unprofitable” expenditure of time, labour and money. Today, wealth is invested for other things like children’s education. This can be further understood through the narrative of the following informant.

Case 1

Name of the informant: Mrs. (L) Ngalashingai

Age: 100 years old


"I am the wife of Oja Marasan from Taloi village. At first I studied at Ukhrul till class IV and then shifted to Kangpokpi where I studied till Class VI. From then on I studied at Jorhat Mission School till Class X or matric. My husband was the first headmaster of Ukhrul Upper Primary (U.P) School. After marriage we settled in Ukhrul town.

I remember as a non-Christian how my mother had to spend a lot of time and energy preparing zam-khor (rice beer). It was not an easy task. Preparing zam-khor is an elaborate time consuming task. It has to be meticulously timed and involves a long and tedious process of preparation. You must remember that the rice to make the rice beer had to be grown and harvested on our green lush paddy field and after harvest stored in the granary. We then take the paddy from the barn, dry it in the sun and then pound the paddy and dehusk it. Once the paddy is pounded then a long process of washing, soaking and fermentation of the take place. This is not an easy task. In fact I remember my mother and I as the eldest daughter had to wake up early at dawn to be the first ones to fetch water from rakhong (water source) before anyone disturbs it. My mother was known for making one of the finest rice beer in the village and everyone looked forward to having a sip of her rice beer. Later on, I came to know that our missionary and our Church leaders banned rice beer as a mark to differentiate us from the non-Christian. We stopped making it at home after our conversion to Christianity. The assurance and hope of salvation through Christ our Lord, which my brother explained to us, was irresistible. My mother many a time expresses her regret that she had not known this faith earlier. I personally remember her being very happy that she is free from the tedious, tiring and time consuming task of making zam-khor.
I saw my parents after their conversion investing all time, labour and money they had for my brother’s education and further studies. They would often walk to Ukhrul carrying rice in the basket (sopkai) to give my brother and later my younger sister rice, vegetables, dry fishes, dry meat, money etc. My brother was able to complete his B.Th in 1951. Then on he served the people of Manipur tirelessly and faithfully. Many a time he walked on foot evangelizing different villages all over Manipur and even other parts of Northeast. We are so proud of him. Christianity has been a source of blessing for our family especially my mother and even for me. As a wife I look after my husband and our eight children. My life has been a wonderful journey since then.

A Christian breaks her/his day with religious prayers and closes it with prayers offered to God. A brief prayer is also offered before starting the day’s work, before every meal and also before sleeping at night. A Christian refrains from doing any major works on Sunday and spends the day in prayers and singing hymns. Christianity has brought changes in a person’s mannerism, the daily activities and also in her/his religious life.

Case 2
Name of the informant: Leishiphy
Age: 30 years old

“Ina Vareli khuisang kahaiwui thili mi kadhar ngasahaowa. Varewui maramli chungmeida theingaihaowa kala thangkha ali ngasopam khangai wuivang khamashung kala seiha kasawui mirinli okthuingaihaowa.”
English translation:

“After being converted, I became a changed person. I have this strong desire to know more about God and my urge to be with Him makes me want to live a righteous and prayerful life.”

A Christian’s life is always occupied with church activities. In some of the Baptist Churches in Ukhrul, there are five church services in a week. The general church services are held every Sunday morning and evening. Wednesday evening service is for womenfolk, Saturday night service is for youth and the married men have their service on every second Saturday afternoon. Children attend to Sunday school every Sunday afternoon. Here, they are taught choruses, Bible stories and verses from the Bible.

During such services, one is asked to lead the service, pray or read out scriptures for the whole congregation. Pastor, church elders and other Christian leaders like missionaries, evangelists, and reverends preach the words of God. This way, everybody gets a chance to participate and get exposed to social activities. Camps, seminars, revival crusades, conference, etc. are organized every year to expand their horizon. Such a practice sharpens one’s personality.

**Case 3 (a)**

Name of the informant: Mr. Vichui

Age: 32 years old

“I nganuilakha ishavana Sunday school li thanvami chinga. Sunday school wui Ojana laa tarakha tamchitheiya kala Biblewui eina aman kasak khararchan kachungkhalai

Ina Shillong kadhadharli ishachonna ili Yaokahomma akhashi shimkhurli zakmai theingarok ngasaka. Chithangwui eina thuida yaokahommashi parei gaharna iwui Vareshirinwui ava-ava kala local guardianla ngasahaowa. Anina ili manglarinwui pongli tharazat khami mang maningla iwui otpam wui lunglila tharazatmi. M.A kupsangkahai thili ina competitive exam kaphok haowa. Ina Officer akhasada ot saphok ngaiya chieina Insurance Companywui Administrative Officer Exam kapiya. Written exam clear sakahaiwui thili Group Discussion kala Face-to-face interview zatta khavai leihaowa. Atam chitharan ina vareli kathebingna ili mi akha ngasakhavai nganuilakhawui eina thuida ngachonmi kahai saikora phaningunga. Aja ina sadakhalei otpam hi ina ningyang unglaka kala ringphalaka, chiwuivang ina ili ngachonmikahai varewui naobingli katang mavaila ningshichingra.”
When I was a young boy mother used to take me to Sunday school where I was taught many songs and valuable stories from the Bible by the teachers like the meekness and leadership quality of Moses, the humility and loyalty of King David, the sincerity and honesty that led Joseph to become the governor of Egypt etc. I remembered as a young boy, how I wished to become like one of them. My mother told me to study hard and be an obedient boy if I want to become like them. Our Sunday school was divided into different grades (junior, intermediate and senior). As per our grades we had to stand on the podium in front of our Church members and read the Bible and present songs. I went to Sunday school upto class X. After Class X, I went for further studies to Shillong. I graduated from St. Anthony’s College, Shillong and stayed in a hostel where I was made the prefect there. Sometimes I used to lead singing in the Church. I am so used to singing in front of a crowd that I do not get nervous even to stand in front of a big congregation.

When I first came to Shillong my sister introduced me to the family of a pastor. They became my spiritual parents and my local guardian too. They contributed a lot in making me of what I am today. Besides spiritual guidance they also gave me career guidance. After completing my Masters in 2005, I appeared for competitive exams. I wanted to start working as an officer, so I sat for the Administrative Officer Exam in Insurance Company. After I cleared written exam I had to undergo Group Discussion and Face-to-Face Interview. There I realized the contribution of God’s servants in boosting my personality, which helped me to become somebody. Today I am happy with my job for which I will be grateful to them forever.”
Case 3 (b)

Name of the informant: Miss Chonmila
Age: 38 years old

“I ngnilakhawui eina thuida Church kachinga. Ina kateiwui thada mathemsalala Church wui ngaran ngayei liva toilak eina zanga. Marakhaliva Bible kapali zang, marakhaliva thanme sa chiya. Aruiruiva ithumna Outreach Mission programmeda akha zatta dalei. Varewui pao kaphahi Manipurwui mipha kachivali kasha samphang khavai kasana. Hili kazang hi I ringphalaka kala ina Vareli iwui kahuiya akha sada kathada khuisangkhala kachihi mibingli hangkida khangachee katharing maleilak mana.”

English Translation:

“I have been a regular Churchgoer since childhood. Though I am not talented like others, I used to take part in Church programme frequently. I was sometimes assigned as a bible reader, sometimes as an announcer and so on. Now we have an Outreach Mission programme with an aim of taking gospel to all the people of Manipur. I am happy and confident enough to share my testimony of how I accepted Christ as my own personal saviour wherever I go.”

Case 3 (c)

Name of the informant: Mr. Wungpam
Age: 32 years old

“Aruirui I youth pastor sadalei. 2003li Theologywui Master kupsanga. Ina tamdaleilakha atamli shimli kashang kherei mapamsalala shim khaung kachida Church wui ngaran ngayei otngarut kachivali zangkhavai atam mичinga. Sunday service lila matuimela
sangasaka. Hina iwuvanga TAMKHUI KHAVAI KAHAKA NGASYA. INA MATHAMEIDA PREACH SASHAP HAOWA. IWUI BIBLE COLLEGEWUI KHANOWA ZINGKUMLI IWUI OJA AKHANA IHI PREACH SATHEI SANGLAK HAIRADA HANGA.”

English translation:

“Currently I am serving as a youth pastor. I have completed Master in Theology in the year 2003. During my student days though I stay away from home I was given all the opportunities to take part in Church activities whenever I came home for vacation. I was given a chance even to preach on Sundays. It was indeed a good experience for me and as a result I improved a lot in preaching. During my final year in Bible College one of my teachers said that I have improved a lot.”

Christianity has groomed a person to a large extent (Zehol 2009). As seen from the different case studies, Christianity indeed helps in personality development. It widens a person’s worldview, changes her/his way of thinking and is more exposed through different programmes and activities of the church. The church trains a person to become a leader through its programme of leadership training. The church services and the weekly family worship service give various spiritual lessons from the Bible. But not all the Christians are sincere and committed. There are many who have converted just in the name only. Many teenage boys and adults drink and smoke that are against the norms and doctrines of Christianity.
6.2 Societal level

6.2.1 Social organization

6.2.1.1 Family

Nuclear type of family is still observed from Hodson’s time. The type of residence, which the Tangkhul follow after marriage is both patrilocal and neolocal.

**Table 6.1 Types of family**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nuclear type</th>
<th>Extended type</th>
<th>Total number of households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork

At present out of 149 households, 140 households are of nuclear type and 9 are of extended type as shown in Table 6.1. The typical Tangkhul family is therefore nuclear type even today.

During Hodson’s time they were all agriculturists, as such more hands were needed and as a result the composition of the family was bigger than compared to the present. In the present situation they are aware of family planning and the age of marriage is postponed due to education. The majority of the families have 0-3 children as shown in Table 6.2.
The Tangkhul family system is patrilineal. They trace their descent through the male lineage exclusively which gives in the patrilineal character. The rule of residence after marriage is based on patrilocal principle. Thus the women after marriage live with the husband’s families. The basic family structure of the Tangkhul Nagas remains unchanged.

### 6.2.1.1 Father’s role

The Tangkhul family, being patriarchal, the father assumes the headship of the family even today. The father continues to carry the greatest authority. In any decision making related to family matters still his decision is still accepted as the final decision. He voluntarily helps his wife in her household chores like cooking agriculture work, splitting firewood, fetching water etc., out of love and care for his wife. The husband is also expected to take care and look after his wife whenever she becomes sick.

With the coming of Christianity and the subsequent introduction of formal education the role of the father is also assumed different kinds of responsibilities. Today the duty and role of the father towards his children has taken a new direction. The father has geared his interest and priority towards providing education to his children unlike the

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**Table 6.2 Family size**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Children</th>
<th>No. of Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork
traditional fathers who emphasized more in training his children on how to become good agriculturists.

Case 4 (a)

Name of the informant: Mr. Phaningmi
Age: 59 years old


English translation:
“I have four daughters and two sons. I am illiterate and I don’t want my children to be like me. I have even sold my terrace field for my children’s education.”

This is a clear indication of a present father who takes up new challenges and responsibilities for his children knowing the value of education. The result of which is now that, two of his daughters are lecturers in two different colleges and one of his sons a medical doctor, and the remaining son and daughter are in college.

Case 4 (b)

Name of the informant: Mr. Ringphami
Age: 53 years old

“Iwui nao chishatna, mayarnao phanga kala shanao kathamna. Ina sorkarwui ot sahaoda Ukhrul townli pamma, kha ipreivava lui vada khali pamma. Ina townli kashang kherei pamhaoda ipreivana nao ngarali yangsanga. Iram eina Ukhrul va tangarok haokida
I have eight children, five sons and three daughters. I am a government servant and stay in Ukhrul town, while my wife is an agriculturist stays in village. Since most of the time I stay in the town, my wife is the one who looks after the children. I can only provide financial help because of the distance between my work place and home. So, the role and responsibility as a father has been affected.”

Today, the fathers may know or may not know the works of arts, crafts or basketry. Some of the fathers also take their children for fishing, hunting, etc., and all these are done only during leisure times. However, today in spite of their busy schedules help their children with their lessons in school impart social and moral values on to them. He is also expected to teach his children the land demarcation of their field with their neighbours or with other village. Even today he is expected to teach the social and moral values. As the father owns the family property whether self-acquired or ancestral property he has absolute power over them. Therefore, the father continues to discharge the responsibility of dividing all his properties to his children (sons) during his lifetime.

Even today the main occupation of the father is agriculture in general in spite of the fact that a good number of fathers are government servants, businessmen, carpenters etc., as shown in Table 6.3.
Table 6.3 Main occupation of father

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Business &amp; Agriculture</th>
<th>Labourer &amp; Agriculture</th>
<th>Carpentry &amp; Agriculture</th>
<th>Employees &amp; Agriculture</th>
<th>Employees-Govt. &amp; Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agriculture-97+Employees-51=148
Source: Fieldwork

The father is expected to provide all basic necessities including food, cloth and shelter for the whole family. Today, the greatest concern of the father is searching economic resources since his top most priority is his children’s education.

The traditional role of the father as a performer of rituals for the family is no more practiced. This has been replaced by the Christian way of life.

6.2.1.1.2 Mother’s Role

In the Tangkhul society, the mother continues to play an important role in the household chores, childcare, agriculture and animal husbandry. Some mothers also supplement family through their earnings as daily wages, weavers, business, clerks in offices or schools and teachers etc., as shown in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Main occupation of mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Business &amp; Agriculture</th>
<th>Labourer &amp; Agriculture</th>
<th>Weavers &amp; Agriculture</th>
<th>Employees &amp; Agriculture</th>
<th>Employees-Govt. &amp; Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agriculture-99+ Employees-46=145 (Source: Fieldwork)
The above table shows that many mothers have taken up more than a single occupation, to meet the need of the family. However, the main occupation is agriculture and the mother is the one who does most of the agricultural work. The mother has the authority over the disposal and consumption of the agricultural products. A man owns and controls the use of dwelling and inheritable properties, but men and women have equal rights in utilization of their fruits of labour. In the case of an agriculturalist the mother’s role slightly differs from that of the working women.

For a working mother the responsibility is more than in the olden days, because they are involved in many other activities both inside and outside the house. In other words, she works at home, helps in agriculture, goes to office or school or does some other businesses.

**Case 5**

Name of the informant: Mrs. Sirawon

Age: 39 years old

kahai thili family prayer leilaka pihowa. School oja sasalala luila vaya; maa kasom, khamao, kahat hkt. hili zanga. Langmeida igaharawui phahon, kachon, pheihop hkt. tharda haikhami hi iwui sakhangayi otngarutna.”

English translation:

“I am a Schoolteacher and my husband is a businessman. We have five children. I keep myself busy from morning till evening. I get up early in the morning around 5.00 a.m. The first thing I do is morning prayer and followed by other routines, such as, washing, cleaning the floor, fetching water, making fire and preparing tea for the whole family. I also prepare food, help my children wash up, arrange their dress and books, polishes their shoes and finally sends them to school. After all these are completed I go to work. In the evening I help in my children’s homework, preparing dinner, and finally after dinner we have family prayer and retire to bed. Besides being a schoolteacher I also take part during the cycle of agricultural operation, which is marked by such activities as plantation, weeding, harvesting etc. Moreover I am responsible of looking after the well-being of my husband such as looking after his cloths (suits, shoes, pants, shawls etc.), so that he does not face any embarrassing situation wherever he goes.”

Till today the mother has the obligation of teaching her children, especially the daughters the art of keeping their homes and surroundings neat and tidy, the art of weaving, cooking and besides this, works of embroideries, stitching, knitting, maintaining gardens are also to taught. Not only the father but also the mother teaches the social and moral values including biblical teachings about the Christian ways of life to their children. As all of them are now Christians they do not perform any rituals, rather they pray before any work is undertaken.
Like in the past women do not inherit ancestral properties though she gets a sizeable movable properties during her marriage known as ‘shimlam’.

6.2.1.1.3 Children’s role

At present the role of a son has changed to a great extent. Instead of only helping their parent in the field, they have taken up education as their main priority, and spend most of their time in schools, colleges and universities. But during the holidays they also help their parents in the field. However the son is not expected to help his mother in the household chores. He rather spends his free time in carpentry or simply socializes with friends. At present when the son is old enough he sleeps in a different bedroom. The introduction of Christian mission and the subsequent introduction of formal education among the Tangkhul led to the replacement of Longshim (youth dormitory) with that of the Christian schools, colleges and hostels in its place. As a result the youngsters do not sleep in the youth dormitories like before. Most of the youths of Ukhrul town have to go out of their native place to pursue their higher education elsewhere in Imphal, Shillong, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Pune, etc. and even abroad.

Regarding inheritance, as a tradition till today, the eldest son gets the lion’s share of the ancestral property such as land, terrace fields, forest etc. as he is the head among all the sons. He takes the responsibility to teaching his younger brothers and sisters in many areas. After his father expires he is considered to be the head of the family who takes all the final decision. Moreover, the eldest son will be given the first privilege to get married. When there is family problem, other sons will always consult the eldest brother for his advice and
suggestions. The eldest son is also entitled to inherit his parent’s house as it is his duty to look after his parents when they become old. Here is a case study.

**Case 6**

Name of the informant: Mr. Ningmayung

Age: 50 years old


English translation:

“I hail from Champhung village. I have three children and because of their education I wanted to move to Ukhrul since the time they started going to school. But I did not want to leave my father alone and he did not want to come with us to Ukhrul. Therefore I had to stay in my village to take care of my father till his death. My family and me are now settled in Ukhrul.”

At present the role of daughters have changed since girls are also given the opportunity for education. Even then during the holidays she helps her parents more than her brothers. In olden days it was a disgrace for a woman who could not weave. But at present most of the daughters do not even know the art of weaving, perhaps they are rather interested in knitting, stitching and embroidery works. All these are expected from the girls. She also helps with the household chores, gardening, looking after the guests,
keeping the surrounding neat and tidy. All these create an atmosphere where the daughter becomes closer and attached to her mother in all respects.

The eldest daughter is expected to look after her younger brothers and sisters in many aspects. She looks after them, teaches them their lessons and also trains them how to wash, cook etc. And it is her utmost duty to look after her parents when they are sick. But unfortunately, daughters are not entitled to inherit immovable property, once they are married they become more attached to their husbands and their families. Interestingly nowadays there are few cases of daughters receiving immovable properties.

**Case 7**

Name of the informant: Somirin

Age: 28 years old

“Ishamei akha kala apanao akhada leiya. Naongalava imanga. Ishava-ishava sorkarwui ot saya kala ishi kathumli Imphalli shimpam akharip lomiya.”

English translation:

“I have two brothers and I am the only daughter to my parents. My parents are government employee and they bought us a plot of land each in Imphal.”

In short, changes have come about even in the family due to factors like education, Christianity and changing economy.

**6.2.1.2 Marriage**

Marriage is one of the important social institutions among the Tangkhul. It is closely connected with the institution of family. In fact, family and marriage are complementary to
each other. Marriage as an institution can have very different implications for different cultures. Its functions and forms may differ from society to society.

### 6.2.1.2.1 Significance of marriage

Marriage among the Tangkhul is an important event not only in the life of the persons who are married, but also for the household that are drawn together in matrimonial alliance. It gives rise to affinal ties for wider networks of co-operation between individuals and households. The customary modes of incorporation and recruitment to the households among the Tangkhul are: (i) by birth, (ii) by adoption, and (iii) by marriage. The basic and significant principle of membership into the household is, therefore, based on incorporation into the family. Birth is a principle by which an individual is incorporated into the family, while adoption is considered as a substitute to birth. On the other hand, marriage is a principle whereby a woman is recruited into her husband’s household.

The Tangkhul regard marriage as a normal event of life for every adult. There are very few persons who never marry.

#### Case 8

Name of the informant: Thotreiyo

Age: 49 years old

“Recently the number of unmarried persons seems to be increasing. Perhaps this has to do with modern education and search for jobs among both men and women. Again a qualified educated woman prefers to have an educated husband who is equally or more qualified. On the other hand a man prefers to have a wife a woman who is less educated than him or equally educated but not more educated than him. He seems to be apprehensive about having a wife more educated woman than him lest she dominates him.”

Whatever be the reason, woman/man attach immense importance to marriage, not only because it is the sole means through which procreation of legitimate children can take place, but also because no woman or man can adequately satisfy all her or his wants or lead a normal life without a spouse. Sooner or later a woman must have a husband and a man a wife.

Marriage among the Tangkhul is a systematically organized understanding between heads of two households whereby women are transferred from one household to another. Such a transaction follows reciprocal rights and obligations not only between two persons who are married but also between two households who form an affinal alliance. Therefore, every Tangkhul finds himself in a network of affinal relationships. An individual’s own marriage establishes a new marriage transaction. Thus marriage among the Tangkhul establishes affinal ties between individuals and their households that are drawn into
marriage alliance. In this fashion, each individual and his household find themselves in a network of affinal relationships in the kinship system of the society.

In Tangkhul society parents take great responsibility to arrange the marriage of their children and are considered as the foremost obligation of the parents. They consider leaving daughters unmarried blameworthy. It was earlier a general practice to perform marriage of their daughters at an early age. However today, with formal education the age at which boys and girls get married is delayed. In the case of a girl she is allowed considerable freedom of choice of her spouse though her parents may occasionally resort to a good deal of persuasion to get her married. But they never resort to force, and cases of girls marrying against their inclination are exceedingly rare.

Each marriage transaction takes place with reference to a body of rules and exchange of valuable gifts. The following are the main rules they follow in their marriage:

6.2.1.2.2 Village/Tribal endogamy

For a Tangkhul, marriage with a person from one’s village is encouraged. Today inter-village/tribe marriage has increased. Ruichumhao a student of Mr. Pettigrew married to a Kuki girl Yangnu who was a student of Mrs. Pettigrew. It was the first inter tribal marriage in Manipur and such is the leavening influence of Christian liberty, and a significant fact in this instance is the coming together of the representatives of two tribes when a year before there was bitter enmity (Kamei 1996). More recently few cases of marriages with outsiders (non-tribals) have also been reported. Therefore, endogamy among the Tangkhul is not strictly practiced today.
6.2.1.2.3 Clan exogamy

Within an exogamous group, that is *shang* (clan) obligatory rules of exogamy are observed very strictly. These rules are based primarily on prohibition of marriage of the persons within the family as well as within the same clan. These rules are rooted in the concept of incest. Incest is known as *shokhala* in Tangkhul. In Tangkhul society incest is associated with the concept of sin. They have taboo on sexual intercourse and marriage between primary kins. Sexual relation between a man and his father’s sister’s daughter is also treated as incest. It is known as *vakhalat*. Incest is subject to serious mystical sanctions and the wrong-doers are even subjected to ex-communication, fine and strong moral censure.

Any adultery between any two persons is regarded as a serious crime in Tangkhul society. The term *suikhangarui* is used by Tangkhul to denote adultery. The village elders in the past used to declare such judgement in public after hearing the cases. If a man had sufficient reasons to believe that his wife had been involved in a voluntary sexual intercourse with another person she would be excommunicated from her husband’s clan and would have to leave the house empty handed. In the same way if the husband commits adultery he should leave the house empty handed. Adultery is a sin, but such extreme practice is not followed in Christian religion.

6.2.1.2.4 Marriage expenditure

When it comes to marriage expenditure, it is difficult to say whether pre-Christian or Christian marriage is less expensive. Both are very expensive. In pre-Christian Tangkhul marriage, there was a feast of merit, rice beer was served, and there was a system of shawl presentation and meat distribution. Today a Christian marriage has become a combination
of traditional as well as modern practices. The study reveals that the elements of competition have crept in Christian marriages. An average Christian marriage, besides spending on the feast, will normally have to spent on (i) wedding cards, (ii) wedding programmes, (iii) decoration of the church as well as the reception area (usually the church is decorated by the bride’s group while the reception is arranged and decorated by the groom’s group), (iv) arranging flower girls (number varies as per bride’s choice), (v) ring boy, (vi) bridesmaid and best man, (vii) dresses, (viii) wedding cake (ix) thank you cards, etc. Marriage still involves exchange of gifts of shawls and meat.

Case 9 (a)

Name of the informant: Mr. Yarngam
Age: 38

Athumwui/athumwui naongara shakzathang ila shokpapamra kala hithada sada katang mavaîmana.”

English translation:
“It has been five years since I’m married but I am still living in debt of marriage expenditure. I am the eldest son in my family and my wife is the youngest daughter from her family. Thus everyone from both the families expected a grand wedding. My parents wanted the same too and I could not persuade them to make it simple. I have two paternal uncles and an aunty. My father made a mandatory to my uncles to gift a buffalo each and a pig to my aunty. Six big buffaloes and eight pigs (around 130-40 kgs. per pig) were slaughtered. Around 60 shawls were presented to our relatives. The entire two villages and others were invited. The expenditure was procured with the help of relatives, clansmen and some money taken on loan. There were of course lots of wedding gifts including some in cash and cheque. But this does not meet the needs as we also have to response on their/their children’s wedding and this goes on as a cycle.”

Case 9 (b)

Name of the informant: Mr.Worchipem
Age: 34

“Ishava-isheda kala mabingna ngala khuhaoluda kahangna chotta. Ila ngala khuipai haira, shimkhur semkaphokpai haira kachi thei kha shakazali zangki kachi chi phaninglaka maramana, ngacheelaka. Shuk khui laka shakzakha khi shokrakhala kachila thei chiwuivang leimanla mazang ngaimana kala shimkhur malila machot ngasak ngai mana. Ishi Tangkhulwui shakaza hi shamda sara kachihi shamlak kahai ot maningmana.”
English translation:

“My parents and relatives have started pressuring me to get married. I too feel that it’s already time to start a family but marriage expenditure is a nightmare to me. I know the consequence of getting married on loan and neither do I want to go on debt after marriage nor trouble my relatives by making it compulsory for them to present animals or shawls. And it is not so easy to make a Tangkhul marriage simple.”

The study reveals that there are cases where the couples still continue to repay the loans, which they have borrowed to meet the marriage expenses even after long years of marriage. They spend because the society assigns status to such spending. The study also reveals that men of marriageable age are scared of marriage because of the expenses. Some of them admit that they do not have enough money to meet the expenses of marriage. And in this manner the marriage age is delayed in certain cases. This may also have forced some eligible men and women to elope. But such cases are few because that will lead to excommunication of such member from the church membership.

The Tangkhul people also have the concept of ‘give and take’ or ‘spend and get back’ attached to the marriage system. That is, you spend on the feast and you will get back the same amount or more in the form of wedding presents/gifts. However the study reveals that in many cases the return in terms of cash is normally less than the amount spent. The study also finds that some families were compelled to arrange wedding gifts though they were not really in a position to do so.

The rising cost of Christian marriages has become a subject of concern for the church leaders. They have come up with different strategies to limit the cost as well as to
establish some uniformity in the marriage proceedings to avoid disparities among the members. But the exercise has not been very successful.

### 6.2.1.2.5 Selection of spouses

Several factors are considered in the selection of a spouse besides the consideration of exogamy. Besides mental and physical capabilities of the spouse, wealth and influence are also taken into consideration. The family history is also considered to see if there are any thief, mad persons, etc. in the family line. Today, in Christian marriages, utmost importance is given to factors like educational qualification, job, and family background.

The Tangkhul custom defines that the proposal for the spouse should come from the young man’s household. Marriage alliances are generally established between the families having equal economic and social standing. Relative age of the prospective spouses is another important factor in their selection. Very rarely does the difference of age between spouses exceed more than five years. Traditionally a man between 20 and 25 years and a woman between 18 and 22 years were generally chosen for marriage. These were the recognized relative age limits of the spouses at the time of their first marriage. In the second or third marriage, however, the relative age of the spouses may vary quite considerably. Today the marriage age has risen due to long years of schooling and colleges. Among the Christians the selection of marriage partners takes place in three important ways: (i) parents selecting life-partners for their children, (ii) men and women selecting their life-partners by themselves, and (iii) parents and children together selecting life partners.
6.2.1.2.6 Marriage proceedings

The proceedings of a traditional marriage and a Christian marriage are quite different. The proceedings towards contracting a marriage alliance in a traditional marriage are formal. The man’s parents and kin take all the initiatives for a marriage. In most cases it so happens that the man and woman know each other but there is no custom of their formal meeting before marriage except on the day of engagement. The most important formality on the part of a bride is to bring some rice-beer on the day of marriage to the house of the groom, where the marriage is scheduled to be solemnized in the evening. The bride is accompanied by a number of friends and relatives. The ritual drinking of the rice beer (rice beer brought by the bride to grooms house) by the groom along with other kinsmen is an important act because this is the first and opening day for the couple to serve the family members through their joint effort.

The mediator of the marriage is called ngalahangsangmi. The ngalahangsangmi, from the initial stage of the marriage, plays important role in solemnizing the marriage. It is the ngalahangsangmi who conveys the preparedness of both parties to each other before the declared day of marriage. It is again the ngalahangsangmi who brings the bride and her party formally on the marriage day to the groom’s house. As a token of respect for her service, the ngalahangsangmi is given a good drink and cooked meat from the bride’s family, and also she receives a skirt (kashan/mekhala) and a shawl (kachon) etc., from the groom’s family at the time of their marriage.

The proceedings of a Christian marriage include the ‘engagement ceremony’, which is normally arranged soon after the selection of the life-partner. The engagement ceremony
takes place after both the parties have agreed. It normally takes place at the bride’s house in
the presence of some church leaders, where the man gives a ring to the woman as
engagement and vice versa. However the ring is not obligatory for engagement. It is also
on this day that the wedding day is finalized by the concerned families along with church
leaders. After engagement the formalities of marriage begin, which include the following:
(a) bride and the bridegroom must provide a certificate of their membership of the church,
and (b) they must provide a certificate relating to their character. If there are no objections
to the proposed marriage, it is held on the day specified day in the presence of certain
witnesses in the church. The man and the woman are required to go to the church to receive
the blessings of the pastor/ clergymen.
Plate 6.1 The arrival of the bride (centre; in traditional attire) in groom’s village, one day before marriage (above); the bride and the groom at their marriage ceremony (below)
Normally, marriage ceremony takes place in the church of which the boy happens to be the member. The Christian priest asks the bridegroom and the bride whether they accept one another as husband and wife. Depending upon their consent he solemnizes the marriage by asking the couple to declare themselves in the presence of the witnesses to be husband and wife. The wedding ring is also exchanged between the bride and bridegroom as part of the wedding ceremony. After all the formalities in the church are over, the whole congregation led by the church leaders goes to the reception area for the feast. The newly married couple will formally cut the wedding cake, which is distributed to the congregation.

6.2.1.2.7 Forms of Marriage

The Tangkhul people are monogamous. The Christian marriages among the Tangkhul are of two kinds today:

1. Holy marriage in the church where both the man and woman marry for the first time, fulfilling all the necessary conditions.

2. The other type of marriage is second marriage, which is not allowed in the church.

The pre-Christian marriage types among them are described below:

1. Sharei shara shakzat: It means a grand marriage. It is the highest category of marriage performed by the well-to-do family. It is expected that at least the leader of the clan or the eldest son of the family must observe this type of marriage. It may be performed in two steps. One, after deliberating the possibility of engagement through a go-between, parents and nearest relatives of both the would be bride’s and bridegroom’s families meet and discuss about the bride price, bride’s presentation and property to be given to the
would be couple etc. On the day of the engagement the bride’s parents must perform a feast to which the groom’s parents may bring one buffalo. Along with this the bride’s family also may kill some additional animals like cows or pigs, etc., for the feast. This is known as ‘shara’ feast. On the following year sharei may be observed, i.e., on the day of marriage.

In this category of marriage the bride must put on the following ornaments (1) *Huishon-naleng*—an ornament, made of brass, which looks like a long chain. It is placed on the head and both the ends dangle on either side of the body. A pair of bells is attached to both the ends of the chain. (2) *Khom-masin*—made of shells and beads, to be worn on the waist or back (3) *Kazao* bracelets—made of brass (4) *Har*—armlets—made of lead (5) *Kongsang*—necklace made of beads of various colours (6) *Zeithing*—metal walking staff (7) *Sopthem*—beautifully made bamboo basket (8) Shawls—(*Phungu* and *Khulangto* to be worn by the bride—*Changkhom* and *Luirim* to be carried with). In this type of marriage every member of the locality or Tang must join in the bridal procession. The groom’s family must kill as many buffaloes as they can and the feast must be a grand one.

2. *Kongsang kaphorwui shakzat*: The second category of marriage is a marriage in which the bride may not use *Huishon-naleng*, but must use superior type of *Kongsang*. But other dresses must be worn as stated above. The number of ornaments, may however, be reduced in this kind of marriage. This is a marriage of a family of moderate means. In this kind of marriage at least some buffaloes must be killed otherwise the bride cannot use a superior type of *Kongsang*. Every members of the locality or Tang is expected to join in the marriage procession of this category too.

3. *Har kazao kasangwui shakzat*: In this kind of marriage, the bride may use *Kongsang, Har* and *Kazao* etc., but they may kill only cows and pigs. The wedding itself is
simple. This kind of marriage is meant for the poor and for the younger children. In this kind of marriage participation of all the members of the locality is not necessary.

4. *Harpai zaopai makasangwui shakzat:* The fourth kind of marriage is the marriage in which the parents of the bride and the bridegroom may simply perform the marriage ceremony by killing only a pig. In this kind of marriage mass participation is not observed during the marriage.

Marriage among the Tangkhul is virilocal, where a woman has to leave her father’s house and join her husband. In a traditional marriage, marriage rituals were complex. Marriage automatically involved transfer of several rights, including the rights over the sexuality of women and her domestic services to the men.

If a woman dies, her unweaned child is taken care by her mother or close uterine kinswomen until he is strong enough to be returned to the father’s house. On the other hand if a husband dies, a widow enjoying full economic rights and jural protection may continue to live in the deceased husband’s house or she may be allowed to shift to her agnatic place even with one or more than one child, if she so desires. A widow may also be allowed to re-marry, preferably within the deceased husband’s lineage, without any ritual and bride-wealth transactions. In case of divorce, a woman returns to her father’s home and lives there until she finds another husband.

To conclude, the importance and significance of marriage among the Tangkhul have not been altered. Though, they have embraced Christianity, the present marriage system is not totally Christian nor is it totally traditional. Though the proceedings and forms of Christian marriage have changed considerably, it still involves observance of the
traditional customs such as the rule of clan exogamy, community feast, gifts of shawls and food, etc. Christianity has not completely taken away the traditional customs and culture from the Tangkhul. No doubt, Christianity has initiated a process of far-reaching social and cultural change among them, but Tangkhul Christianity is typically Tangkhul in character.

6.2.1.3 Kinship

As far as kinship is concerned there is more of continuity than change. Incest taboo is strictly prohibited within the same clan. Such marriages are believed to cause sterility or to result in an idiot or diseased offspring. In spite of the prohibition even today marriage between the same clan occurs. With the advent of Christianity such practice was liberalized and as such those persons who got married within the same clan were neither exiled from the village nor excommunicated from the clan membership. However, they are looked down by the society.

Case 10

Name of the informant: Mr. Ngamshang
Age: 53 years old

“Ipreiva inihi shang akhawui einana, chiwuivang eina ini unghungra kachili ava-ava kala shangwui mibingna tarakha happa kha chithasalala ini unghung haowa. Iniwui nao kathum, mayarnao akha kala shanao khanida leiya.”
English translation:

“My wife and I are from the same shang (clan), our parents and clan members were against our plan of togetherness but in spite of the opposition we got married. At present they have 3 kids, one boy and two girls.”

6.2.1.3.1 Kinship term

There are some changes in kinship terminology due to the influence of Christianity. The following are the kinship terms given in relationship with ego. In all the following figures, the members of the kinship are placed in accordance to their age. The eldest one in the extreme left, followed by the younger ones.
Figure 6.1 Address form of ego to his paternal relatives

Where, $\Delta$ stands for male

‘O’ stands for female

‘=’ stands for marriage

‘I’ stands for descent

‘II’ stands for sibling

Figure 6.2 Address form of ego to his maternal relatives
Figure 6.3 Address mode of ego to his siblings, children, in-law and grandchildren

Here,

(a) & (e) = amāk, (b)(c), & (g) = achon/ajei, (g1)=ikato/atiao(d) = amei/achui/ajei, (f) = azarvā/izarvā (h) = Irihā/Irihā kharara, (i) = naokhararvā/naongalavā khararvā/naomayara kharara, (j) = Irihava, (k) naomayara kakhane, (l) naongalavā kakhane, (m) Irihā,(o) naongalavā paisho/naomayara paisho, (n) = Irihā paisho.

In the above figure number 1.2, and 1.3 ego may be of female as well. But in Fig. 1.4, if the ego is female it would be slightly different in the address form of ego to her younger siblings otherwise the rests are the same. It is shown in the next figure.
Kinship groups are usually classified into two broad groups, viz., classificatory kins group and descriptive kins group. In a classificatory type of kinship system, one single term is used for a set of persons standing in different types of relation to the ego.
and among themselves. In the second type of kinship system, single kinship term refers only to a particular individual and specific kind of relationship. The kinship group found in Tangkhul Naga society is that of classificatory. For example, even other male elders who are one’s father’s age group are addressed as ava (father). All the grand children address their grand or great grand father as awo. The same term may also be used by the persons who are not related at all to the person but whose age group falls into this category. The same term is also used in addressing all the uncles (maternal and paternal) and father-in-law. Similarly the term ani is used for both mother-in-law and aunties.

Analysis of kinship terms allows to draw the following:

The Tangkhul addresses their cognates and agnates through kinship terminology. They are taught to love and respect their own clan relatives as members of a larger family who are given proper kinship terminology.

(a) In Tangkhul society, there are many alternatives terms for husband and wife. The kinship term for wife and husband is ipreiva and igahara respectively. But these terms are seldom used. Instead the husband calls his wife nava/nashava (your mother), or nickname, or refers the name of their child as prefix of nava. For e.g. if one of their child’s names is Awon then it would be Awon shava, i.e. Awon’s mother. The wife would therefore address her husband as Awon shavā or Amei/Achui/Ajei as prefix to his nickname or nashavā. Most of the Tangkhul nicknames are, one syllable from the real name and added ‘A’ (pronounced as ‘a’ in ago) as prefix. For instance the nickname of Mr. Ngaraipam is Mr. Apam. The proper name of the spouse is almost never used unless
the situation arises to identify the spouse to a third person, because it is regarded as disrespect towards the spouse.

(b) Brothers and sisters have got a particular term to address each other. They mutually respect each other on the age basis. The elder brothers and sisters are addressed as *amei* and *achon* respectively. Whereas for the younger brothers and sisters there are different terms depending on the sex of the speaker. For male speaker the younger brother and younger sister are addressed as *ikato* and *izarva* respectively. If the speaker is female the younger brother and younger sister are addressed as *apanao* and *ikatuiva* respectively. The same terms of address among siblings can also be applied for cousins of the same generation except for the matrilateral cross cousin. If ego is a male then his mother’s brother’s daughter is his *amuila*. Elder siblings of either sex are customarily addressed with a kin term while the younger brothers and sisters were usually addressed by their proper names or nicknames even though there are terms for them like *akato*, *apanao*, *azarva* and *akatuiva*.

(c) In addressing their parents, children of both sexes use the same kin terms. In Tangkhul, the appropriate term for addressing mother and father is *avā* and *avā* respectively. Parents as well as people who are of senior in age generally addressed their children by their proper names or nicknames or by their kin terms.

(d) In the Tangkhul society age distinction is maintained by kinship lines. Father’s elder brothers and mother’s elder sisters’ husbands are addressed as *avakharar* and the father’s younger brothers and mother’s younger sisters’ husbands are addressed as *avakato*. Father’s elder sisters are address as *anikharar* and father’s younger sisters are addressed as *anikatui*.
(e) The same terms for parent-in-laws are used by both the son and daughter-in-law. Father and mother-in-law in Tangkhul are āwo and āni respectively. But the parent-in-laws use different kin terms for son and daughter-in-law. The term ‘irihā’ for son-in-law and ‘irihāvā’, for daughter in law are used. For the eldest child’s spouse, the term khararva and kharara are added as suffix to iriha and thus called irihakhararva and iriha khrara. Amui is a common term of address between a woman and her husband’s sister. Similarly a man and his wife’s brother address each other by the kin term amāk irrespective of their age.

(f) A stepmother is always known as avakatui (younger mother) while stepfather is avākato (younger father). Children of different mothers but of a common father are considered to be full brothers and sisters, but those of different fathers and of a common mother have different clan names although their kinship terms are the same as those from the common father and mother.

(g) The Tangkhul also give the status of recognition to the father or grandfather, mother or grandmother to all elderly people even if not related. The genealogically appropriate terms of addressing grandfather is awo and grandmother as ayi, and the grandchildren are addressed as Ira. There are no distinct terms to identify younger and elder grandparents. In general all the aged male and female are termed as awo and ayi, elderly male and female who belong to one’s parents’ age group are termed as avā (father) and avā (mother).

(h) In the behavioural pattern, juniors should not address their seniors by name. If a person addresses his senior by name it implies that he does not respect his elders. Even for those who are outside the kinship, personal name alone without an appropriate term as
prefix is never used to address. Male and female younger than parents but older than oneself are termed as *amei* or and *achon*, respectively. Male and female of the same age group addressed among themselves as *itao* and male and female younger than oneself (but older than children age group) are addressed as *izarva* for girls and *ikato* for boys if the speaker is male. If the speaker is female then *ikatuiva* for girls and *apanao* for boys. The prefix ‘I’ (pronounced as ‘I’ in sit) and ‘a’ (pronounced as ‘a’ in ago) can be used interchangeably in Tangkhul kinship terms. There are some common kinship terms used for more than one person, for e.g. the term *ani* is used for mother-in-law and for aunty. In such case if there is a need to particularize then they used the particular person’s name along with the proper kinship term.

(i) In a clan the eldest male member is the head of the clan and he is entitled as *amei* or *ameikharar*. The second son is entitled as *achui* and the remaining sons are *ajei*. Among the girls the eldest daughter is entitled as *achon* or *achonkharar* and the rest are called *ajei*. After the father expires, the eldest son becomes the head of the clan and his eldest son and eldest daughter alone will inherit the title of *amei*. If *achon* married with *achui* or *ajei* from another clan then she can have that title in her lifetime but cannot be inherited even by her eldest daughter.

Kinship consist of both affinal and consanguineal relationships. Both of these ties play important roles in organizing the Tangkhul kinship system. Tangkhul life is centered on the kinship system. Tangkhul kinship system is made up of *shang* (clan), *meiphung* (lineage) and *shimkhur* (family). In Tangkhul society, the most important social group is the clan which is known as *shang* and the clan members are called *shangnao*. It is an exogamous patrilineal descent group. There is no Tangkhul who does not belong to a
clan. In the past, members of the same clan lived in one locality. Clan has an active function in Tangkhul society. Though the father is the head of the family, he cannot go against the will of his clan. All the important decision should be taken with the clan’s consent. In times of happiness or in times of trouble such as marriage, divorce, death etc. one’s clan is always by the side. Tangkhul marriage is quite expensive. Both sides of the family have to slaughter many animals for the wedding feast. Shawl has to be given to all the bride’s and groom’s uncles and to the heads of both the clans. So without the help of the clan it is not possible for a single family to marry their daughter/son. A husband cannot ill-treat the wife or vice versa, as it has to reach the elders of the clan. There is a series of ritual and ceremony to be performed when somebody dies. The family alone cannot do without the help of the clan. The head of the clan is the clan priest and he has to be there to perform the rituals from the time of death till thisham festival (a festival of feast given in honour of the departed soul). Likewise in all other needs and necessities they seek help from the clan and that strengthens the clanship ties.

Meiphung consists of more than a family. It consists of parents, their unmarried children, married sons and their families. The eldest male member of the meiphung is the head of the meiphung. He is also known as meiphung akhava. The meiphung akhava belonging to the eldest meiphung is the head of the clan. If there is a problem in a family, the head of the family dealt with it, but if that become too big a problem then it should be taken to the meiphung, from meiphung to clan and eventually to the village.

The Tangkhul address their cognates and agnates through kinship terminology (āthei āsā mingpho). Some terms like amei, ajei, achui, and achon are not just the terms but these are titles given according to their hierarchical position in the family and society.
The kinship terminologies that are used as a marker of defining the kinds of hierarchical status are on wane under the influence of Christianity. The titles *amei, ajei, achui, achon* etc. are no more in vogue as titles but have become more or less like terminology used to address people older than oneself because hierarchical system among the society has no space in Christianity.

**6.2.1.4 Dormitory (Longshim)**

In pre-Christian days the Tangkhul had an institution called *longshim* (youth dormitory). It was a place where the young people were very strictly disciplined and trained for traditional art and crafts, religious and social activities. Here the young boys and girls learned the culture and customs of the Tangkhul. Every Tangkhul boy and girl on reaching adolescence moved into the *longshim* and remained there until his or her marriage. *Longshim* plays a very important role for Tangkhul. The institution occupied a central position in the village organization and administration, as an institutionalized mechanism of social control and socialized education. Generally the Tangkhul used their chief’s house as *longshim* for boys. In case the village is too big and the chief’s house is too small to accommodate all boys of the community, they might, with the permission of the village headman as well as from the village council, install as many *longshim* as required in other houses of the village. However, the houses of the clan heads, who possessed the required qualifications, such as being a rich and generous clan’s head, who is a socially acceptable and influential man and above all who had a commanding authority and who could be in a position to accommodate the youth in a proper way were used as *Longshim*. The Tangkhul *longshim* can be divided into two categories- *mayarlong* and *ngalalong*. *Mayarlong* means young boys’ dormitory and *ngalalong* means young
girls’ dormitory. *Mayarlong* and *ngalalong* were of different set up and were also accommodated in different houses. Young boys and girls were admitted to the *longshim* as soon as they attain puberty. Once they join the *longshim* they could leave it only when they got married. In case the marriageable age is over and could not get married, he or she can leave at their middle age. In *ngalalong*, “the one who could charm the inmates, because of her skillfulness in weaving and many other allied works of woman, gains the name *Khamarapva* which means a smart and expert girl in the society and she happened to be the leader of the girl’s *longshim*” (Ruivah 1993). Weaving played the most important part in the socio-economic development of the Tangkhul and *Ngalalong* dormitory. In *mayarlong* small boys listened to stories from their seniors or they would occupy themselves with some other forms of amusement, whereas the seniors would do basketry work, splitting of bamboo or cane and some other allied works. Boys would often pay a visit to *ngalalong* and together sang, exchanged stories, chatted, made fun, shared jokes, as the girls remained busy with their spinning, stitching and other allied activities.

But when the missionaries entered the Tangkhul terrain, they discouraged the idea of *longshim*. They considered it as an expression of paganism for its association with drinking, free mixing and warfare. With the replacement of *longshim*, the Tangkhul culture has been considerably modified. The discontinuation of *longshim* has both merit and demerit. What they did not realize was that a culture was at stake as it was this coming together of young people that oriented them to the structure of their own society. The art of weaving, hunting, oral stories etc., which were taught at the *longshim*, ceased to be a part of a young person’s life when he/she listened to the “Christian” norms and
stayed away from the longshim. On the other hand the youth could now give more attention to their affairs at home. The introduction of Christianity and the subsequent introduction of education made church and school or college the most common meeting places. Thus, it can be said that gradually church and school became the center of social and cultural life of the Tangkhul.

6.2.2 Economy

The Tangkhul are mainly agrarian. There is a good population of potters among the Tangkhul of the southern side. Earlier the Tangkhul practiced shifting cultivation, but today they started the cultivation of land or field with modern farming methods. Almost every family have their own field and all members of the family except the disabled and the old, work in the fields. They grow paddy along with other vegetables like cabbage, potato etc. Dogs, pigs, and buffaloes are also domesticated. Small poultries are also kept in the houses (Arokianathan 1982). Hunting and fishing are also practiced. Cotton weaving is also prominent in Tangkhul.

Case 11
Name of the informant: Ningmi
Age: 82 years old

English translation:

"After being converted my parents discontinued animal sacrifice and brewing rice beer. They thought that they would feel guilty to disown their traditional belief system but they didn’t. Instead sold the animals in times of need and spent some for treatment. They were very much relieved."

Mysterious sicknesses, the sudden appearance of boils, blindness, loss of speech, premature greyness, are regarded as, if not inevitable consequences, certainly as probable consequences of breaches of taboos (sharra). Since their attachment to the sharra rules is morality of a kind, this belief contains the rudiments of the idea that physical suffering and sickness are due to sin—to breaches of what is “tribal law”. While breaches of these ordinances are, as a rule, the ultimate cause of these forms of sickness, their proximate cause may be, and often is, the malignant activity of some powerful offended spirit. Therefore, the deity kameo is approached by sacrifice when men are ill (Hodson 1911).

The introduction of education by Christian missionarries also paved away the economic burden to a large extent. Timothy (one of my informants) said, “the Christian missionarries were the pioneers in giving the modern type of education to Tangkhul. They felt the need for education while propagating Christianity. They felt that unless they were educated they might not be in a position to understand Bible and encourage their children to embrace Christianity.” In fact the first converts were all educated and gainfull employed.

It has been found that a large number of Tangkhuls today are aware of the importance of education. This has increased the number of educated persons. Among the
literate families, a change has taken place where the educated persons can now be
gainfully employed e.g. government services. One of my aged informants who is well
educated said, “If we look at the traditional days, when the Tangkhul were not educated,
they were mostly confined to agricultural works and household chores. Because of
modern education and changes that are taking place in the society, many of us have
gradually stopped doing work in agricultural fields and have engaged in government and
private jobs.” The gift of education from Christian missionaries liberated them from
ignorance and empowered them to stand for their rights and privileges as true citizens of
India. They are no more deprived of political and economic manipulation of the
government (TBL Centenary Souvenir 1996). Christian missionaries had also contributed
largely in imparting vocational knowledge of the Tangkhuls. New occupations like
carpentry, tailoring, book binding, printing etc. came into existence.

6.3 Tribal level

When discussing on the impact of Christianity at the level of tribe as a whole, tribal
identity and a new worldview are the things that come to mind.

6.3.1 Christianity and Tangkhul identity

In the Pre-Christian period the idea of Tangkhul identity was not clear. Down (1994)
wrote: “…In fact there was not even a name for the tribe commonly accepted by its
members.”

Luikham (1961) said, *Tangkhul kachi hiya ishitui maningmana Meitei tuina. Meiteina
homikahai eine Tangkhul Tangkhul da zatkahai hi thotkha kahaira. Kha ishi
khararming “Wung” hia thot shashawui mingna. Chia Wung hosai.* It means that, the
word Tangkhul does not derive from our language but it’s a Meitei language. It’s been a generation that the Meitei has given the name Tangkhul. But our ancestral name “Wung” is a name for centuries. We were called Wung.

He further writes that their folksong is the proof that they were called Wung. One of such folksongs goes like this:

“Meiteilava sitmahui,
Wungram kashangla leishiya;
Ali reklai ungsifaya
Nashimphungli maranthei sui,
Suikhareireilo ini kuini ini kuinasa;
Thishunglo O nathanvala thishunglo”.

The meaning of the song is: There was a war between the Meitei and the Wung. Wung defeated Meitei and thus there were so many Meiteis who took shelter in many Wung villages. Some of them who lived among the Wung for 2-3 years fell in love with Wung people and got married but some left without getting married.

The song given above was the song of that time. In this song the term Tangkhul is not at all mentioned. In all their folksongs the term Tangkhul is not mentioned anywhere. It is also worthwhile to mention the following folksong:

“Paoyi Shongphung ngajanseiya,
Lungva kharangshung,
Phungcham Paoyi ngazeka;
Ngazek ngazek Wungram vapeiya”.

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The above folksong can be translated as: In Paoyi village there was a rich man called Shongphung. He was so rich that he erected a huge monolith in his courtyard. News of his abundant living was spread like a wild fire throughout *Wungram* (the entire Tangkhul inhabited areas).

S.M. Dubey wrote:

“In the Pre-British period, most of the tribes were not conscious of their ethno-tribal identities and their world was confined to their family, clan, “Khel”, and village. Terms like Naga, Kuki, Abor, Lushai, Garo, Chulikata and Kapur-Shor were given to them by the non-tribal plains people… Even the major tribal groups in Nagaland- such as the Ao, Angami, Lotha and Konyak- got their names from other tribes.”

The Naga identity formation is a recent phenomenon. Many tribes who call themselves Naga today, were unaware of the term... The Naga identity continues to be an evolving identity. However, politicization of the said identity has led to myth-making and propaganda. It made the study of the Nagas and their identity necessary in anthropological, cultural and historical perspective to remove the perceptual haziness about the same (Singh 2005: 7-14).

6.3.2 Tangkhul identity, a product of colonialism and Christianity

In the Pre-British period or before the coming of Christianity the idea of Tangkhul identity was not clear. Christianity helped in maintaining Tangkhul identity by promoting tribal solidarity. The primary units of Tangkhul identity were family, marriage, kinship
and village. The several villages were frequently at war with each other, and developed dialectical differences so great that communication among them was difficult if not impossible. Hodson in his book ‘The Naga Tribes of Manipur’ noted that the language of the Tangkhul from the extreme south was totally incomprehensible to those living in the far north. The Tangkhul lived within clearly defined geographical boundaries and their physical appearance was distinctive. Again, in the matter of traditions and beliefs, with their attendant rites and ceremonies, the greatest unity is found though it is hard pressed to identify what constituted a tribal level as distinct from a village level community.

6.3.3 Development of Tribal identity in the British and Christian era

During the pre-British and pre-Christian era tribe was not a primary reference point for identity among the Tangkhuls of Manipur. It became increasingly so during the British/Christian and post-British/post-Christian era. British bureaucrats needed to classify and name the peoples they governed. They were the first to systematically assign names to the tribes (tribes of Northeast India). They often used names given by neighbouring peoples or even names that apparently arose out of misunderstanding of informants (Down 1994).

Some scholars have acknowledged in a general way that Christianity has played a significant role in the development of tribal identity in the North-East (Ibid.). D.N Majumdar noted: “The contribution of Christian missionaries in the development of a sense of solidarity among the Garos is also significant.” Similarly K.S. Singh says, “A cultural dimension of the political process has been the phenomenal rise of Christianity in
all North-eastern states during the 1961-71 decades, as a symbol of tribal identity, as a marker of status in all states except Arunachal.”

Christianity contributed towards strengthening a sense of tribal identity in at least four ways: (a) through the creation of standard language, (b) through its educational work, (c) through its new worldview, and (d) through its ecclesiastical structures.

(a) Through the Creation of standard Language

The Tangkhul did not have a written form of their language when the missionaries first came among them. Because of Christian missionaries’ emphasis upon the importance of Christian literacy, the first thing that the missionaries did when beginning work among the Tangkhul was to reduce its language to writing. While the missionaries did so that the people might be able to read the Bible and develop an intelligent understanding of their faith through modern education, the consequence of their creation of a written language and the first literature in Tangkhul language was the creation of a standard language. “Of necessity one of the several dialects in use among the members of the tribe had to be selected invariably it was the dialect of the place in which the mission first established its centre” (Down 1994).

It is widely believed that there is a natural connection between the language spoken by members of a social group and that group’s identity. By their accent, their vocabulary, their discourse patterns, speakers identify themselves and are identified as members of this or that speech and discourse community. From this membership, they drew personal strength and pride, as well as a sense of social importance and historical continuity from using the same language as the group they belong to.
As language is so important in the construction of individual and social identities, it can also be a powerful means of exercising social control. Identifying oneself as belonging to a particular group or community often means adopting the linguistic conventions of that group, and this is not just in relation to the words you use, but also in relation to the way that you say controlled by the group rather than the individual (Romaine 1994)

Any language is cherished as an important element of one’s cultural identity by the people speaking the same. It is a symbol of pride and an indication of social identity by displaying how the people talk, dress or behave. It may be mentioned that the question of identity- how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us- is not defined merely by the place of our birth, upbringing, parents or the socio-economic group to which one belongs. Language has a great role here. Identity, whether it is at the individual, social or institutional level, is something which we constantly build and negotiate all our lives through interaction with others. A person speaking a particular language identify himself or herself and others through the use of that language they view their language as a symbol of social identity. The prohibition of the use of a particular language is often perceived as a rejection of that social group and culture to which they belong. The loss of language means the loss of culture and identity.

Language is an important element of one’s cultural identity. A person speaking a particular language identifies herself or himself and others through the use of that language. They view their language as a symbol of social identity. It is a matter of great prides for the Tangkhuls to have their own language. In spite of this the identity was weak due to dialectical differences. Tangkhul is one of the linguistically diverse
communities in Manipur. Almost all the villages have different dialects named after the village, which is hardly or not understood by another village. It was in the area of language that Christianity played a significant role in unifying the Tangkhuls. When William Pettigrew (the first Christian missionary of Tangkhul) found that the linguistic link was weak among the Tangkhuls due to dialectical differences he reduced the various Tangkhul dialects into Tangkhul language, which was followed, by reducing its language to writing in Roman character as the Tangkhuls had no written form of their language when the missionaries first came among them. He introduced the Ukhrul dialect as the lingua franca of the Tangkhul through his writings of Tangkhul primers, translation of Gospels, hymns, Bible and other books in Ukhrul dialect. The motive of the missionaries was to spread the gospel effectively by enabling them to read the Bible and develop a major understanding of their faith through modern education.

(b) Through its educational work

Under government patronage the Missions established a network of schools throughout each tribal area. In fact a school was established before a church in most villages.

Among the Tangkhul it was Christian missionaries who introduced education as they felt it necessary to impart Christianity. The first task taken up by William Pettigrew was to start constructing school building and to learn the language of the people. A lower primary school was accordingly opened at Ukhrul in the month of February 1897 with an enrolment of 20 boys. Thus, modern education had its root in Ukhrul under the guidance of Pettigrew. The primary school at Ukhrul established with the initiative of Pettigrew had been upgraded to the standard of a Middle English school in 1906. He continued as
the headmaster of the school for a long period after its establishment (Singh 1996). Moreover they helped them to raise their standard of living by teaching them various other skills.

Plate 6.2 A Hr. Sec. School, christened Alice (wife of William Pettigrew)
Plate 6.3 William Pettigrew College’s gate (above) and one of the blocks of William Pettigrew College (below)
(c) Through its new worldview

The most important element in the Christian ideology was its universalism. (Downs 1994) Whereas the traditional Tangkhul religion had generally been perceived to be relevant mainly to the family, clan or village. Christianity was proclaimed as relevant to the whole tribe, indeed to all humankind. This universalism was reinforced by an emphasis on the Christian responsibility for evangelism and service even to members of the tribe who were hostile to them. In fact, the first persons to establish significant positive contacts among villages traditionally hostile towards each other were Christian evangelists, people employed by the missions or by churches and volunteers. In a real sense these were the first agents of tribal solidarity. (Ibid.)

Hodson (1911) asserts that the Tangkhul were animists. They worshipped several deities. There are different deities for different places like the deity of house, field, jungle, river, stone etc. Therefore rites are performed accordingly (Horam 1988). Gradually when Christianity was introduced they all converted to the new faith and worshipped only one God just as the Holy Scripture reveal that there is only one Supreme Almighty. When the Sacred Writings were translated into Tangkhul the translator inserted one of the names of traditional deities i.e., Varivara in the place of God. The Tangkhuls originally believed that they came out of a cave in the earth at a place called Murringphy in the hills, about four day’s journey north-east of the Manipur valley. (Hodson 1911: 10-11) However with their conversion to Christianity the Tangkhul’s belief about their origin also changed. According to the new faith the origin of man lie in the creation of a human being in God’s own image.
(d) Ecclesiastical Structures

The fourth way in which Christianity contributed to the development of a tribal identity was the creation of Ecclesiastical structures. When members of a tribe became Christians, they were organized into local churches; when these local churches were numerous enough they were organized into larger ecclesiastical units. In nearly all cases these church organizations were the first to bring together representatives of the whole tribe. (Down 1994)

When the Tangkhul became Christian, churches were constructed in different colonies and villages. Combined meeting of all the churches is often held. Such meetings bring together representatives of different churches and strengthened solidarity. In the year 1917, the Christians gathered at Ukhrul and organized their first association, which came to be known as Manipur Baptist Association. Until 1928, all the Baptist Churches were included in this Association. The Association held its second meeting at Kangpokpi in 1920. In 1928, this organization was replaced by the Manipur Baptist Convention within which there were many associations. The convention held its first meeting at Kangpokpi in 1928. Today there are three conventions (Baptist, Catholic and SDA) in Ukhrul district and the meetings are usually held in Ukhrul, the centre and headquarters of the Tangkhuls.