There are major changes happening within the tribal societies today which have rendered untenable the arbitrarily juxtaposing of the tribal society as the remnant of the archaic and primitive historical past and the modern society with all the scientific and technology driven cultures as two opposite ends of a continuum. Beginning with the colonial rule, which brought western education, Christianity and the attendant modern world view, many of the tribal communities in the north east India in general and the Tangkhul in particular have witnessed unprecedented pace of change. In the post-colonial independent India the pace of change within the tribal society has been further accelerated owing to the various policies and programmes adopted by the government to ‘integrate’ the tribe with the rest of the society, more specifically, the ‘mainstream’ society. Of significance in this context is the government’s policy of positive discrimination, also referred to as the affirmative actions or the reservation policy, for the Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Scheduled Caste (SC) in India. This policy along with other socio-economic and cultural developmental programmes adopted by the government towards the tribe in India has brought about rapid and far reaching structural transformations within the tribal societies. One of the most important impacts of these policies and programmes is the emergence and development of a new tribal group. This new group of people is broadly referred to as the tribal middle class basically due to their similar orientations and lifestyles with the middle class of the non-tribal society.

The emergence and development of the new group within the tribal social structure ushered in a new phase in the transformation the erstwhile traditional society. And one of the primary focuses of the present chapter is to analyze the development of this particular group of people so as to see whether they are the offshoot of the recent interventions from outside or are they generic categories which
gets transformed due to the outside interventions; the kind of leadership they provide for the society and above all how the identity of the Tangkhul is represented or negotiated by this group of people in the present context of rapid transformations and changes. But most importantly, the chapter seeks to explain, one the one hand, how tradition instead of dying out gradually is perhaps reinforced by the middle class. On the other hand, the social and political implications of such a process of reinforcement of tradition in the contemporary period for the society in question are also explored in the present chapter. The present chapter touches upon two major sociological concepts which are commonly used to explain division in the society - elite and middle class. A perusal of the concepts is necessary before delving into the more specific concern of the present work. A brief explanation of the concepts as used for the present study is presented below.

4.1 Elite

The term ‘elite’ is used to mean many different things and to describe certain fundamental features of organized social life. Elite theory, courtesy Vilfredo Pareto, is psychological compared to Marx’s conception of class, which is in socio-economic terms. Pareto argued against the Marxist economic determinism by asserting that human are differently endowed and by virtue of these differential endowments the society is divided into the rulers and the ruled since time immemorial. Thus, he argue that “[i]t is bootless to object that modern parliamentary democracies have no ‘governing classes’ and that personal autocracies, by definition, represent rule by one single person and not by a ‘governing class’. Everywhere there exist a governing class, even in despotism: it is the forms under which it appears that differs. In absolute governments there is only one figure on the stage – the sovereign; in the so-called democratic government, it is the parliament. But behind the scenes all the time are people who have very important functions in the actual works of government. Whether universal suffrage prevails or not it is an oligarchy that govern” (Powers, 1987: 52). He further adds “[w]e can, crudely, divide society into the lower stratum and the superior stratum. This latter can in turn be divided into two groups: those who
“directly or indirectly” play some considerable part in governing (and who are referred to as the governing elite and later-and more frequently-as the governing class or the governing classes), and the rest of the elite not in the government: the non-governing elite” (Ibid. 51).

Similarly, for Karl Mannheim in Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction: Studies in Modern Social Structure (1940) elites are those ‘minorities, which are set apart from the rest of the society by the pre-eminence in one or more of these various distributions’ (Rajora, 1987: 15). Laswell et al. The Comparative Study of Elites have also viewed elites as the ‘holders of high position in a given society’ (Laswell et al, 1952: 6); Bottomore in Elites and Society defines it as the ‘superior social groups’ (1964: 6); Cole in Studies in Class Structures defines elite as ‘groups which emerge to positions of leadership and influence at every social level’; body of persons enjoying a position of pre-eminence over all others (1955: 105); Raymond Aron in “Power and Status Relations,” in European Journal of Sociology defines elites as ‘the minority which in each of the enumerated professions, has succeeded best and occupied high positions’ (1960: 260-81); C.W. Mills also prominently dealt with the concept of elite. He explains elite in the institutional rather than psychological aspects thereby departing from Pareto’s conception. Mills rejects the view that members of the elite have superior psychological characteristics, which distinguish them from the rest of the population. Instead, he argues that the structure of institution is such that those at the top of the institutional hierarchy largely monopolize power. In his famous work The Power Elite he opines that “[t]he power elite is composed of men whose position enable them to transcend the ordinary environment of ordinary men and women, they are in positions to make decisions having major consequences. Whether they do or do not make such decisions are less important than the fact that they occupy such pivotal positions” (1956: 13).

There are no exhaustive works done on tribal elite and class though it has featured in some works at regular intervals. While explaining the tribal situation
rather than engaging in a rigorous analysis of the conceptual application, it has been dealt with a casual and unproblematic attitude thereby withholding the development of local categories for explaining the local situation. Nevertheless, there are growing attentions towards evolving local genres or by conceptually contextualizing the more general categories. Rajora while analyzing the emergence, nature and role of elites among the Bhil tribe in Southern Rajasthan defines the elites as “thus, we may think of the elites as those who are regarded as superior, influential and are held in high esteem by the people: they may or may not have formal positions in politics and the government, but they are in a position to influence the decision making process, set values and uphold them” (1987: 16). While identifying the elites among the scheduled caste of Andhra Pradesh, Abbasayulu is of the view that “elites are those who use intellect and rationale judgment while participating in decision making policy and occupy position of trust and responsibility” (1987: 19).

4.2 The Middle Class

The popular use of the concept of middle class is usually associated with the Marxist tradition though Marx did not deal exhaustively with the middle class. Marx nevertheless mentions them in The Communists Manifesto (1967) when he notes the composition of the proletariat class. He indirectly note that “[n]o sooner is the exploitation of the labourers by the manufacturer, so far, at an end, and he receives his wages in cash, then he is set upon by the other portions of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker, etc. The lower strata of the middle class-the small trades people, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants—all these sink gradually into proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialized skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production. Thus, the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population” (1967: 115). The emergence of the middle class coincided with the downfall of feudalism in Europe in the 16th century. They primarily comprised of the enterprising merchants and tradesmen who occupied
the position between the aristocracy and the serfs along with the growth of capitalism. Since then it has closely grown in size and composition with the advancement of capitalism. The term ‘middle class’ generally refers, as the term suggests, to that section which lies between the capitalist and the working classes or the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the capitalist society.

Ghanshyam Shah in “Middle Class Politics: Case of Anti-Reservations Agitations in Gujarat” in *Economic and Political Weekly* defines middle class as “[t]he middle class is a class between labour and capital. It neither directly owns the means of production that pumps out the surplus generated by wage labour power nor does it, by its own labour, produce the surplus having use value and exchange value.” (1987:155-157) Abbasayulu noted “[t]he two key attributes distinguishing the class from other social classes are its possession of education or knowledge in the broader sense of the term and leadership qualities that help to put the class at the top in all walks of life” (cited in Rajora, 1987:19). “Broadly speaking, this class consists of petty bourgeoisie and the white-collar workers. The former are either self employed or involved in the distribution of commodities and the latter are non-manual office workers, supervisors and professionals such as engineers, pleaders, doctors etc. constitute the middle class” (Ibid. 155). The impetus of the emergence of the middle class in the Indian sub-continent can be roughly traced to the pronouncement of Lord William Bentick, the Governor General, who found in English education a means of raising a class of persons who would be “Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect: or in short, Indians with modern western minds” (Bhatia, 1994: 28).

According to Bhatia in *India’s Middle Class Role in Nation Building* this class was indeed the offshoot of the British rule whose nuclei was provided by the class of intermediaries that served as a link between the local people and the English rulers. He argued that the stage in the creation of this class was set with the establishment of trading relations followed by the rule of the British East India Company in this
country. He identified three main factors that moulded the class into shape and help it to grow in social prestige, as well as material conditions of life. They are, firstly, the new land laws and property rights that shook the rural society to its very foundation. This had the effect of holding up agricultural growth, the introduction of exploitative urban-rural based relationship in the agrarian economy and an increasing pauperization of the peasantry. Second, the opening of new jobs and opportunities in civil administration, commercial activity, industrial enterprises and liberal professions, especially the middle ranks. And third, the introduction of English education, which he considered the most important effect of establishment of British rule in India. “English language became the unifying force for diverse elements that came to constitute the new social class, giving them a distinct class identity. In fact, the middle class in the Indian context came to mean the (English) educated middle class. The English knowing class that lived in the urban areas and by virtue of their association with the foreign rulers in terms of government service, agency works of English farms and belonging to liberal profession that afforded opportunity of contacts with the Englishmen, had come to enjoy, in the eyes of their countrymen, prestige and higher social status on that count” (Ibid, 21-26). He concludes by pointing out that basically the “[m]iddle class means the western educated urban section of the society that is largely engaged in the “service” sector of the economy for its livelihood” (Ibid 16).

4.3 Contextualizing the study

Which of the two concepts – elites or middle class – would best represent the situation of the Tangkhul society today? As pointed out in the above pages the emergence and the use of the concept of elite implies a close link between the natural division of those who possesses or inherits wealth, power or other determinants of authority and command in the society and the rest of the population who do not posses such qualities or assets by birth or inheritance. The existence of different categories of people in the society with unequal access to power is supposedly seen as natural and inevitable from the perspective of elite. On the contrary, the concept of middle class
apparently emerges and develops simultaneously with the transformation of the old structures of the society as capitalism advances. Middle class implies a process which is on going and therefore is better suited to represent the situation of the contemporary Tangkhul society. However, it is important to note that notwithstanding the advantage mentioned above the use of middle class to explain the social reality is questionable because capitalism is absent in the Tangkhul society. Even otherwise in the contemporary Tangkhul society the middle class have ceased to occupy the intermediary position they used to during the British rule. The limitations of employing the category of middle class while explaining the Naga society in general is noted by Ghosh (1983) in “Emergence and Role of the Middle Class in Nagaland”. He argue that “since there is no landed or industrial aristocracy in Nagaland, technically the term middle class is wrong, because there is no other class above it, although there is one lower. But sociologically it is correct because nowadays by middle class we understand a certain educated class of people who earn their bread by themselves by brainwork, and do not depend on the interest of the money invested or other’s labour, neither on physical labour as most of the lower class people depend on” (cited in Ray, 1983: 219).

The problem of ambiguity in the use of the concept of middle class is further compounded because in the recent years, even in the wider context, the size and composition of the middle class has grown rapidly becoming more heterogeneous with the transformation of the capitalist societies that it is doubtful of calling it a single class. Bhatia has pointed out the exasperating task of defining the middle class in concrete terms for the sociologists because it has come to represent so great a diversity in terms of income, status, vocations, skills and educational qualifications. “It has practically become meaningless”, he argued, “to group them together and designate them as a single social class” (Ibid, Bhatia, 1994: 5-6). Significantly, he explained the development of the middle class in the recent times in the context of the transformation that capitalist societies in particular and the rest of the world in general have undergone. He note “[t]his century has witnessed rapid advances in science and
technology; managerial revolution in the conduct of business and industry; rise of the state planning and growing governmental intervention in the operation of the market forces; widespread fervour for democracy and egalitarianism; growing sex equality and the entry of women into professions that were earlier regarded a exclusive preserves of man; rapid spread of higher, including technical education; the emergence of high degree of specialization affecting all professions and various walks of life that had led to multiplication of experts, specialists, and “service” personnel of all types. This has meant enormous increase in the numbers along with growing heterogeneity and diversity of elements included in the middle class” (Ibid).

Despite the above mentioned complexities social scientists have retained the concept of middle class because of the usefulness to explain social change in India particularly after independence. Similarly, the present chapter in particular and the work here in general have used the ‘middle class’ concept as defined in the above pages because it provides a better perspective of representing the empirical situation of Marou village and the Tangkhul society than the related concept of elite. However, this should not imply that the separation is always neat and rigid. On the contrary, there is always constant overlapping in the use of any one of these concepts. It also needs to be noted at the outset that the group categorized as the middle class in the present context is an offshoot of western education, employment opportunities and avenues that develop with modernity and growth of bureaucracy. From such a perspective it is argue that middle class, at least in the context of the present study, has no allegiance or bases on tradition. Notwithstanding this fact, however, the emergence and growth of middle class and their leadership have reinstated tradition in a very remarkable way. It is this apparent paradox that the present chapter will focus.

The middle class in the Tangkhul society has come a long way. They are now considered as the legitimate leaders in the present day Tangkhul society and by that virtue they have been accepted as the guardians of traditions. If one looks closely at the conditions and the trajectory through which this particular class developed. be it at
the village level or the broader Tangkhul level, it will be evident that it were the non-traditional forces accompanying the colonial rule which gave birth to them. Moreover, the history of the crystallization and consolidation of the middle class as the emerging leaders of the society is marked by constant overhauling of tradition and their claim to possess modern knowledge and power. But what one witnesses in the present day Tangkhul society is the authority of the middle class to be also the arbitrator of tradition. In fact in the recent times there seems to be a reversal of the historical trajectory of the development of the middle class in the Tangkhul society. Nowadays the middle class, instead of deriving the authority from their claims of possessing the modern stock of knowledge, is beginning to lay the claims of their leadership and its legitimacy upon the possession of the authority to interpret, implement and invent (if they perceive that the situation demands it) 'tradition'. It can be assumed that it is because of this changed nature of the arbitrators of tradition, and to a certain extent tradition itself, that many societies are witnessing heightened activity of tradition leading to sharpening of identities based on primordial considerations. We will come to these issues in more detail in the following pages. Now let us look at the state's official policy and practices vis-à-vis tribe in India which phenomenally contributed to the growth and development of middle class in the tribal society, especially in the post-colonial situation.

4.4 Tribal Policy in Postcolonial India

While the above observation that the introduction of western education, growth of capitalism etc. following the colonial rule led to the growth of middle class is true for India as a whole during the colonial period there is yet a further dimension in the postcolonial independent India with regard the growth of the middle class among the 'Scheduled Tribe' (ST henceforth) and the 'Scheduled Caste' (SC henceforth). This is the state's policy and practices towards the tribe in its attempt to integrate the tribe into the mainstream society, which is evident in the various constitutional provisions regarding the amelioration of the STs and the SCs in India. The Constitution of India incorporates several special provisions for the promotion of educational and economic
interest of Scheduled Tribes and their protection from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. These objectives, especially the socio-economic developmental aspects, are sought to be achieved through a strategy known as the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP henceforth) strategy, which was adopted at the beginning of the Fifth Five Year Plan\(^1\). The strategy seeks to ensure adequate flow of funds for tribal development form the State Plan allocations, schemes/programmes of Central Ministries/Departments, financial and Developmental Institutions. The cornerstone of this strategy has been to ensure earmarking of funds for TSP by States/Union Territories (UT henceforth) in proportion to the ST population in those State/UTs where they inhabit.

Besides the efforts of the States/UTs and the Central Ministries/Departments to formulate and implement Tribal Sub-Plan for achieving socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs is implementing several schemes and programmes for the benefits of Scheduled Tribes. According to the latest official information available from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, besides a separate Ministry constituted in October 1999 to give more focused attention to the development of Scheduled Tribes, there are now 194 Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs) in the country where the ST population is more than 50% of the total population of the blocks or groups of block\(^2\). During the Sixth Plan, pockets outside ITDP areas, having a total population of 10,000 with at least 5,000 scheduled tribes were covered under the Tribal Sub-Plan under Modified Area Development Approach (MADA)\(^3\). So far 252 MADA pockets have been identified in the country. In addition, 79 clusters with a total population of 5,000 of which 50 per cent are schedule tribes have been identified\(^4\).

What is particularly surprising in the context of the various ameliorative steps initiated by the state is that in India though several constitutional provisions and developmental steps have been pursued for the socio-economic development and empowerment of Scheduled Tribes there has been no national policy, which could have helped translate the constitutional provisions into a reality. It is only very
recently that for the first time after the country is proposing the formulation of a national policy on Scheduled Tribes known as the National Tribal Policy, which at present is in the draft stage. In the absence of such a national tribal policy, which could act as the common guide and official document for reference in undertaking any socio-economic or political initiative vis-à-vis the tribal communities, the country has been guided in the administration of tribal affairs by the five principles known as Nehruvian Panchasheel recorded in the 'Foreword' to Verrier Elwin’s book ‘A Philosophy of NEFA’ (1960). They are:

1. Tribals should be allowed to develop according to their own genius.
2. Tribals’ rights in land and forest should be respected.
3. Tribal teams should be trained to undertake administration and development without too many outsiders being inducted.
4. Tribal development should be undertaken without disturbing tribal social and cultural institutions.
5. The index of tribal development should be the quality of their life and not the money spent.

The most significant aspect of government’s policy toward the tribe is the state’s affirmative policy which continues to fuel the emergence and development of middle class in the contemporary India. In India the affirmative policy adopted by the state is known as the ‘reservation policy’ or sometimes as ‘positive discrimination’. As per the policy weaker section of the population like the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes are given reservations in employment sectors, educational institutions and similar set ups of the government. Apart from providing reservation the government has also given numerous concessions to SC/ST in direct recruitment as well as promotion and infrastructure has also been set-up specifically for the weaker sections of the population containing procedural and institutional safeguards. For instance, the main objective for providing reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in civil posts and services of the Government is to give jobs to some persons belonging to these communities and thereby increase their representation in
the services, so as to facilitate their social and economic advancement and make due place for them in the society.

Article 16(4) of the Constitution specifically empowers the State to make any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which is not adequately represented in the services under the State. With the same end in view, the Constitution envisaged in the Directive Principles of State Policy and elsewhere economic and educational development of the weaker sections, particularly the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Eventually the reservation policy and other developmental schemes doled out by the state empowered a certain population of the Scheduled Tribes/Scheduled Castes setting them apart from the remaining members of their society in terms of disposition and access to sources of power and other metropolitan way of live. They are the so-called middle class and the emerging leaders within the Scheduled Tribes/Scheduled Castes communities. Majority of them are therefore the direct beneficiaries of the state’s affirmative policy. Indeed it is for this fact that middle class can be rightly considered as the latent outcome of the state’s policy to develop the Scheduled Tribes/Scheduled Castes communities.

4.5 Locating the middle class in Marou Village

Following the definition of middle class for the present study provided by Bhatia (1994) and also noted by Ghosh (1983) in the context of Nagaland outlined in the above pages we may tentatively categorized those households in Marou who derive their income from sources other than the village land as belonging to the middle class in the village. Seen in this way then 29.51 per cent of the total households in the village belong to the middle class category (refer to table no. 3.2 in Chapter III). However, this is not a homogeneous group. They differ in terms of type of occupation and income. In terms of occupation 8.20 per cent are government (State/Central) employees, 1.64 per cent is government employees as well as pursuing private small businesses simultaneously and 19.67 per cent are those engaged in various the non-
land based activities like school teachers, small businesses, private employees, contract works, small time politicians and pensioners etc (table no. 3.2 in Chapter III).

Similarly, with the varying occupation and nature of employment their income also varies. The annual income of 3.28 per cent of the government employees in Marou ranges from rupees 40,000 to rupees 60,000; 8.20 per cent between rupees 60,000 to 80,000; and 4.92 per cent returned their annual income as above rupees 80,000. On the other hand, the annual income of those in the ‘other’ type of occupations ranges from 6.6 per cent below rupees 20,000, 9.84 per cent between rupees 20,000 to 40,000 and 1.64 per cent between rupees 40,000 to 60,000 (refer table no. 3.7 in Chapter III).

The rest of the households that is 70.49 per cent of the total households in the village depend on the village land for their income and livelihood (refer to table no. 3.3 in Chapter III). The ‘non-middle class’ households in Marou is also not a homogeneous category. They differ markedly in terms of the ways they derive their livelihood from the village land. Table no. 3.3 in Chapter III may be referred for the types of agricultural activities engaged by various households in the village. In terms of their income the difference between these households depending upon the village land for their livelihood are not very marked. Majority of them have their annual income below rupees 20,000 (29.5 per cent, 16.4 per cent and 4.9 per cent of the households in the village for jhum, terrace and farm respectively). Only 4.92 per cent household both with jhum and terrace type of cultivation have their annual income returned as between rupees 20,000 to 40,000; and a small percentage of 3.28 households practicing terrace type of cultivation returned their annual income between rupees 40,000 to 60,000. There are no households in the village practicing agricultural activities whose annual income is higher than the ones mentioned above. Farming seems to be the least income generating agricultural activity because all the households in the village practicing this type earned less than rupees 20,000 annually.
The division of the society into the middle class and ‘non-middle class’ or lower class based on dependence on ‘services’ or non-land related activities is nonetheless problematic. For instance, 1.64 per cent of the agriculture practicing households in Marou is also government employed, works on the terrace fields in the village and also practices farming: 4.92 per cent of the agriculture practicing households in Marou are government employed who cultivate terrace fields and 1.64 per cent of the households practicing agriculture practicing households in Marou is government employed, cultivate terrace fields and also engages in small time business like owning a rice-mill, video parlour or a ‘pan-dukan’ in the village. Where do we categorize them? Owing to their multiple occupations their incomes are higher than the ordinary village households whose income depends solely on agriculture. Yet due to the lower level of employment in the government sector their income does not measure up to those households who are higher in scale and posted outside the village. At the same time there are households who stay outside the village due to their employment but own terrace fields in the village which they lease out to the villagers. Moreover, there is no formal or informal organization/association in the village besides the existing traditional institutions of clan and the village council which could foster the class interests at the moment in Marou. Therefore, there is a need to identify more attributes which will help in locating the middle class in a small village like Marou.

Indeed this group of villagers is an assorted lot with varying occupation, income and also living standard. What is common, however, is the fact that they are collectively different from the ordinary village folks and it is this difference that simultaneously sets them apart (from the village folks) as well as unites them together (at least as a group in the perception of the villagers). One common denominator which separates the ordinary villagers from the above group is the latter’s wider contact, possession of knowledge and connection with what is perceived as ‘influential’ or seats of power beyond the village boundary. It needs to be noted that the traditional world view which revolves around the village and its land has now
shifted beyond its boundary. Now in the new world-view the core or centre is located beyond the village and the only means through which the ordinary villagers have access to the centre is through the group of villagers who possesses the knowledge about the complex ways that the centre functions. Thus, the middle class in Marou would comprise of all those acting as the intermediaries between the ordinary villagers and the centre of power in the modern socio-economic and political set-up. Owning or non-owning of land does not matter as much as not having the right ('strong') connection with the seats of power. It is the latter that most of the villagers apparently choose to value in the contemporary situation of the village.

4.6 Middle Class: Emergence and Impact

The growth of middle class at the all-Tangkhul level is a direct product of the introduction of Christianity, western education, and new job and occupation opportunities along with the ‘introduction of money economy’ in the Tangkhuls society. Mishra while commenting on the issue, noted that “[w]ithout going into the merits and the demerits of the missionary assault on the traditional practices of the tribes, one may conclude that Christianity and the western education it brought with it, which combined and the Christian ideas of universal love with the political and social beliefs of western Liberalism, no doubt helped the individual to overcome the negative aspects of tribal isolationism, thereby helping him to see across his tribe boundaries. This contributed in no small manner to the emergence of the middle class in Naga life” (1983: 156). Similarly, hinting at the nature of the middle class which emerged with the introduction of money economy Mishra observed that “the introduction of currency and the development of the money economy afforded opportunities to individuals to amass personal fortunes and for a few to collect in their hands the means of production formerly distributed between many, and the persons who succeeded were often those with no hereditary responsibility for the welfare of their kinsmen and their fellow villagers” (Ibid. 1983: 154). This new middle class is primarily composed of ‘salaried bureaucracy, businessmen ranging from affluent government contractors to petty shopkeepers, man belonging to the various
professions such as medicine and teaching as well as owner of urban property in the form of houses let out to tenants. Amongst these sections it is perhaps the bureaucracy that is the most important’ (Ibid 1983). The Tangkhul Employees and Professionals Association (TEPA) whose members include bureaucrats, other white-collar workers, the contractors, technocrats, teachers at the university, college and school level and politicians is the Tangkhul middle class par excellence. Together they roughly represent the urban-based, salaried, modernized, mobile, politically active and enterprising section of the Tangkhul population.

There are two important points to be considered while analyzing the emergence and development of the middle class in Marou village in particular and among the larger Tangkhul society in general. Firstly, the emergence and growth of the middle class in the Tangkhul society, as pointed out in the preceding pages, is closely tied to the colonial rule and the western education it introduced in order to generate a class of locals who will help in the colonial administration—‘Indians with modern western minds’. Therefore, it was primarily the requirements for modern political and administrative functioning that the middle class was deliberately created initially. Even today these needs continue to determine the size and content of the middle class in the Tangkhul society. This is so because most of the middle class members belong to the salaried group and the absence of private undertakings in the region means that the state is the only employing agency. Secondly, not only is the middle class as a category totally new but even those individuals composing the middle class are also completely new to the kind of authority and power they are endowed with. Most of the present day middle class households today in Marou belong to the non-land owning groups in the past. They are the second generation whose parents are the first literates in the village under the colonial educational system.

It is said that when western education was first introduced in the region only the children of poor households in the village attended the schools. People then did
not foresee the advantage of acquiring education. Many of them perceived education as luring their children away from the land and their traditional ways of live. Thus, the land owning and richer families kept their children from attending the schools. However, the colonial rulers, who were promoting western education, sensing the attitude of the people desisting from sending their children to school for acquiring education, passed a decree making it an offense for those villages which did not sent a certain number of children to school. The penalty for violation of the decree was additional house tax to be paid by the defaulting village to the colonial rulers. So to avoid paying the additional tax the village sent the children of the poorer families in the village. It is told that the village as a whole even borne the expenses of those children who were sent to school in terms of food supply. In addition certain grants like giving a piece of land for cultivation and wood for fuel were also given to the families whose children were sent to school.

The middle class espouses new values and standards which in a way opposes the traditional values. For instance, the middle class households of Marou are urban in their living standard. their children go to private English schools and have relatively better education, they reside mostly outside the village due to their employment or other engagements and are also more politically more involved and aware. Some of them own lands and houses in towns and the state capital, Imphal. Many of them also have houses and own lands especially terrace fields, and more recently farms, in the village. Taking up of new and modern occupations in urban areas not only lead to the slackening hold of kinship obligations and the related growing disparity between the haves and have-nots it also undermines the traditional collective values that had evolved from close physical existence in the village. For instance, jhum cultivation demands large labour force; the construction of terrace fields on the river valleys or slopes of mountains, the construction of canals: after harvest there is again demand for labour for ferrying the paddy to the village from the fields which are miles away from the village. These tasks are now carried out with the help of paid/wage labour and it no longer depends solely on kinship or other social
networks that exists in the village. The shortage of labour in Marou village has led to the hiring of wage labourers from outside the village, mainly the Meiteis from the plains. It is quite usual now to find these Meiteis in Marou throughout the year engage in one or the other activity. Their arrival in the village has in certain degree heightened the use of money in place of the traditional practice of paying in kind or exchange of labour between the villagers. This has further impinged on many traditional practices. For instance, the old practice of distributing the meat after a successful hunt to the relatives and the neighbours is completely undermined. Whatever is killed is straightaway sold for money. In turn, there are some individual households in the village who spent most of their working hours hunting in the forests for sale in the market. This is a cause for worry because in the long run it may lead to extinction of certain varieties of animals and fowls.

Further along with these changes various feasts and festivals, which functions to strengthen the group solidarity in the past, are now being neglected. The role of Christian missionaries and the attendant world view or the ‘Christian way of life’ is primarily responsible for undermining the importance of feasts and festivals in ensuring that marked division between the poor and the rich do not arise through wealth redistribution; that group solidarity and networks are enhanced and re-strengthened; such festivities and celebrations also provided the occasion for expressing and reinforcing the sense of belongingness to the village among its members. The Christian ways of life based on the scripture become the yardstick to determine what traditions of the Tangkhuls should survive and what should not. In this way many of the traditional practices and world views were undermined or relegated to the past while new ones were created or invented to suit the new world view. Festivals like Christmas, Easter etc. are something which was introduced with Christianity which does not have root in the traditional society of the Tangkhuls. Therefore the decadence of the traditional ways of life in Marou and the emergence of new ones which are far removed from the local context not only led to the growth of a
new group of power brokers but also undermined many of the bases which cemented the social political relations in the village.

Along with the rise of the middle class there is also redefinition of many values and ideals that characterized traditional Tangkhul society. For instance, one such redefinition is with regard to wealth. It needs to be noted that in the past it was not the accumulation or possession of wealth per se but generosity in sharing or distribution of the wealth to the community was given the ultimate prestige and honour. Generosity, rather than thriftiness, was the norm accorded with more importance by the Tangkhuls in the recent past. Material wealth or riches are only the means, through social distribution, to acquisition of social prestige and positions in the society. The Feast of Merit is a good example of this tradition. Thus, the notion of wealth amongst the Tangkhul was predicated upon generosity rather than hoarding. Such beliefs acted prudently in mitigating the emergence of wide disparity between the rich and the poor in the remote past. Equally important is transformation at the cognitive and the attitudinal level. The middle class being the product of Western education created new cognitive values, practices, thought categories and knowledge in direct opposition to the traditional values and practices, for instance, new notions of hygiene, beauty, and new leisure activities completely dissociated from the immediate Tangkhul way of life. Whosoever possesses such standards and cognitive values gained prestige and come to be accorded higher honour thereby ushering in new principles or bases for social differentiation. The cumulative effects of the spread of western education that leads to the growth of new occupations, growth of urban centers, commercialization of forests and agricultural products and more recently the emergence and growth of service sectors in non-governmental organizations and related fields etc. is precisely noted by Aram (1972) in “The Emerging Social Situation in Nagaland and Some Suggestion for a National Policy”. He observes that ‘[a]s the Naga society emerges from the traditional tribal form and moves into modern industrial phase, we visibly see disparities between different sections of the population and between the urban and the rural sector. There is no doubt that during
the recent years some have become very rich whereas the bulk of the population is still on the old standard of living. With educated Nagas holding important administrative positions and other prestigious and remunerative job the gap is growing between the educated section and the uneducated section. Not only in matters of financial emoluments and physical facilities but in other respects also, such as cultural standards and ways of living, great disparities are developing. To some extent the growth of disparities are unavoidable in a developing society but then as these disparities goes beyond a certain limit social tensions are bound to arise' (1972: 127).

Taking note of such tremendous changes happening in the tribal society today Aram argued that with the impact of modern life and culture, there is a strong trend for the Naga people to become more and more individualistic. He is, further of the opinion that the average Naga is more concerned about his individual advancement and welfare which was not so in the past as earlier the Naga villages were well knit units with strong social cohesion. Today there is loosening of the community bonds and the individual is more and more on their own. In certain respect this is a healthy development because to be a prisoner of the powerful collectivity of a clan or the village was not as good as it is constricting upon the independent development of an individual. But on the other hand, the old values of community solidarity and corporate actions are disappearing (Ibid. 1969).

Similarly, Horam (1977) in Social and Cultural Life of Nagas (the Tangkhul Naga) also observes that “[t]he needs of the average man are multiplying, to meet which the simple farmers have overnight turned to the more interesting occupation of quick money making. This is injuring agriculture in general and weaving in particular, especially when the latter is the only cottage industry extant today in the Tangkhul Hills. Other crafts such as pottery work, basket making, and such others are threatening to disappear altogether. The colourful Tangkhul shawls are no longer a ‘must’ with the younger people, and very few girls know how to weave them. Used of tailored and ready- made, and often ultra-modern garments is on the increase, and if
this state continues shawl making may also disappear altogether. Woodwork and bamboo-work are also becoming rare. But these changes can be reversed and are trivial when compared to the others which are having far reaching adverse affects and are eating into the very foundation of Tangkhul society" (1977: 96). Also Sayasaachi (2001) in “Forest Dwellers and Tribals in India” argues that “[a]s forests dwellers depend more and more on the market for their livelihood, they acquire values alien to their way of life. These values create a discontinuity between generations. The market also generates a demand for bio-diversity resources that is insensitive to the rate at which these resources are reproduced in nature. Most importantly, it undermines those social and culture that bring forests dwellers in close proximity with nature and thereby prepares the ground for studying and generating knowledge about its bio-diversity" (2001: 83).

4.7 Inventing Traditions: Middle Class as Modern Myth Makers

In the early 1960s, Frantz Fanon (1967) in his famous work Wretched of the Earth observed the “passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era” among anti-colonial intellectuals, to fend off “a Western culture in which they all risk being swamped,” and to conjure from the mists of a glorious past a way out of the miserable present (Fanon 1967: 168). However, Fanon also noted that decades or centuries of colonial rule had changed indigenous cultures such that it was no longer possible to go back to its authentic roots. Furthermore, in many cases the colonial boundaries cut through the territories of indigenous communities and threw together peoples with different traditions. One common response to these predicaments, according to Fanon, is to ‘invent traditions’. The present section looks at how traditions are invented and the role the middle class plays in this process. In dealing with the invention of tradition the works of Eric Hobsbawn’s11 and Terrance Ranger’s (1983) are also heavily relied upon.

In the beginning it is important to note that it is particularly difficult to talk of identity of a particular group, for example the villagers of Marou, in isolation. This is
to say that identity formation of a group needs the ‘other’ against which the identity of the self could be formed and internalized. Moreover, identity becomes more sharply marked and differentiated when two or more groups are in a situation of competition for scarce resources. Precisely it is the absence of these contexts at the village level that the present analysis of identity needs to be seen from the all-Tangkhul level. Secondly, it needs to be noted that the growth and consolidation of the middle class as the new power-brokers at the village and the all-Tangkhul level needs to be contextualized primarily within the existing larger political aspirations of the Naga for nationhood on the one hand and their response, as leaders of the society, to the modern socio-political and economic situations in the state. Basically this section focuses on the role of middle class in the Tangkhul society as the modern myth makers.

It has been pointed out above that the Tangkhul middle class was given birth by the need to run and administer the newly introduced modern political and economic structures under the colonial rule for which a completely new class of people with different kinds of skill and orientation as opposed to the ones based on traditions was necessary. They were selected to administer the majority of the population who were largely governed by traditions that was undergoing rapid and unprecedented changes. Finding themselves at an advantageous position at such a historical moment the middle class preyed upon the opportunity to establish their roots in the traditions by inventing them where it does not exists to naturalize their position and become acceptable to the people. Perhaps it is possible that with little ingenuity the selected group of people invented traditions through selection, addition or marginalization which could serve to achieve certain ends, of which consolidation of their rule in the society was the most prominent. After all colonialism in the beginning was more about domination of other groups for the economic benefits of the dominating group. What means goes into it was not so necessary as long as the end is beneficial or profiting to the dominating group. Exhibiting precisely such an approach the Tangkhul middle class too were trained into the colonial 'structures of
meaning’ (Thomas 1942: 2) to care little for the means as long as they succeed in keeping the larger section of the population under the colonial rule.

That such an approach continues to be followed even in the postcolonial period is rooted in the policy of the state which continues to use the middle class as its intermediary to govern and administer the larger section of the population. Long periods of adulation from the state and access to scarce resources, on the one hand, have eventually established the Tangkhul middle class as the ultimate and legitimate leaders of the masses. Related to this is the state’s policy of distribution of its various benefits and schemes of development through a group based mode rather than individually. Consciousness of and familiarity with such a policy of the state enabled the middle class to organize and assert the identity of tribe as a means to corner the benefits provided by the state. Thus, an identity rooted in backwardness, undeveloped economy, etc., incorporated within the notion of tribe, is revitalized or invented where it does not exist by the middle class in the name of overcoming the same hurdles and bringing about development. This tendency together with political patronage is the reason why issues of reservation and tribal development still remain a major rallying point in the present situation. It is in this context that Virginius Xaxa (2006) in “Culture, Politics and Identity: The case of the tribes in India” argues that the rise of tribal identity ‘can be laid at the door of the emergence of a middle class within the tribal society. With the emergence of this class in particular issues of culture, tradition, and livelihood, even control over land and resources as well as demand for a share in the benefits of the projects of modernity have become an integral part of the articulation of identity among the tribes. There is, therefore, a new consciousness among tribes now coming from its middle class’ (2006: 286). Elsewhere he observed that ‘the larger the size of this class (middle) the greater has been the articulation of identity among them’ (Ibid. 2006: 288).

This new consciousness fostered by the middle class has wide ramifications for the concerned society. In the case of the Tangkhul society there is simultaneously
an attempt to overhaul the traditional structures, especially those structures vested with power like the institution of Awunga or village chief, on the one hand, and something resembling cultural revivalism in the middle class’s attempt to mobilize the people in the competition with other groups for cornering the scarce resources from the state, on the other hand. The currently on-going move to replace the traditional office of the awunga (headman) by the post of the village chairman is a good example of the middle class’s attempt to assume control and power in the Tangkhul society. They claim that the traditional system is an impediment to development as most of the village headmen are illiterate and ignorant of the complex ways modern day government functions. In its place a modern institution occupied by the literate middle class needs to be established that will be elected by the villagers for a specific tenure and function on modern lines of administration. In response to it the headmen of several Tangkhul villages have come together under a common platform known as the Wungnao Long (Chiefs’ Association) to oppose the move. The fear of losing their privileges and benefits is translated into upholding the traditions that gives a unique identity to the Tangkhuls. At the same time there are other attempts which belie the middle class’s commitment to establishing modern institutions in the Tangkhul society. For instance, the decree issued by the Tangkhul Shanao Long (Tangkhul Women Association) against the modified pattern motifs woven in the traditional Tangkhul shawl and wearing of western wedding gown by the bride. Their argument is to preserve the ‘essence’ of the traditional Tangkhul culture. Moreover, during the recent Naga-Kuki clashes during the early 1990s Tangkhuls were banned from wearing or possessing cultural artifacts like shawls and other clothes belonging to the Kuki group.

Similarly the formation, composition and mode of functioning of the Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL henceforth) at the all-Tangkhul level also make the role of the middle class in the invention of traditions self-evident. The TNL is the apex body of the Tangkhul endowed with judicial powers to adjudicate matters related to customary laws of the Tangkhul. But in the absence of historical records, oral or written, of such
institutions in the traditional Tangkhul society and given the fact that each Tangkhul village was an isolated unit, at best the TNL is but a construction which has inadvertently contributed to the formation of an all Tangkhul consciousness and thereby the Tangkhul identity. Thus, it can be summarily concluded here that the middle class in the Tangkhul society contests tradition while also inventing them where it does not exist in order to further their position as leaders of the society. It is also to legitimize and to root their leadership in the past so as to be acceptable to the people. In the present context these attempts of the middle class to carve out a separate identity of the Tangkhul based on tradition serves both to resist being subsumed by the majority Meitei community and also desist from being clubbed with the other tribal groups inhabiting the state. However, at the same time these attempts are dictated by the vagaries of Naga nationalism. The Tangkhul identity and its implication for the larger society presents a very perplexing issue in that it has to be simultaneously represented in such a way that it differentiates them from the non-Naga groups but consonant with the identity claims of other tribes like the Maos, Mayons, Marams, Thangal etc. who also belong to the Naga fold.

The role of the middle class as modern myth makers is more evident in the role of the middle class as intellectuals and ideologues and their selective use of tradition in the formation and perpetuation of the Naga national identity of which the Tangkhul are part and parcel. It is important to note that the middle class of the Naga society has been the major backbone of the movement though the movement is the manifestation of the political aspirations of the people for self-determination. The emergence of the Naga national identity is closely tied to the British colonial rule in general which culminated in the drafting and submission of the Memorandum by the members of the Naga Club to the Simon Commission in 1929. The Naga Club was founded in Kohima, the present day capital of Nagaland, in 1918. The members were mainly drawn from the newly emerging English educated, Christianized and modernized section who were occupationally in the government services. It also has representatives from several other tribes like the Angamis, Aos and Sumis (also
known as Semas). In the initial periods, it is reported that a few leading headmen of the neighbouring villages of Kohima who used to attend the meetings of the Club for the solution of social and administrative problems also became its members. Although not much is recorded about the activities of the Club its activities and nature can be extracted from the demands in the memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission.

The memorandum demanded that ‘the Nagas be excluded from the scope of the proposed constitutional changes and instead be kept under the direct administration of the British’. Further the memorandum emphasized the keeping of their development on the tribal lines, which implicitly refers to the Club’s awareness of the political rights and privileges of the people. The Naga Club was followed by the Lotha Council and the Ao Council (1928), the Naga Hills District Tribal Council (1945) and finally the Naga National Council (1946). In the beginning the Naga National Council (NNC) was composed of 29 members who represented individual tribes on the basis of proportional representation. The primary goal of the NNC in the initial period was to foster the welfare and the social aspiration of the Nagas. It was not exactly a political organization in the sense that it did not have paying membership and no pledge of loyalty to the party. Nevertheless, the NNC established itself as the sole organized force in the Naga Hills gradually encompassing the political needs and aspirations of the people. Under the NNC the various tribes came together for the first time under a single organization. One significant result following the coming together of various erstwhile more or less isolated and independent tribes was the emergence of an all-Naga consciousness. This all-Naga consciousness ultimately gave birth to a new identity of the Nagas as a nation – the Naga national identity – which till today remains a contentious issue with the Indian state. And the vigor and strength with which the issue is kept alive today points to the active role of the middle class.

The Naga nationalism as a movement is primarily engaged in the struggle for political sovereignty against what it claims as the subordination by the colonial Indian
state. The Naga movement is thus considered as an anti-colonial movement by the Naga nationalists and shares many of the strategies deployed by the anti-colonial movements all over the world, especially the cultural construction of an independent national identity using tradition. The Naga’s claim of right to self determination is predicated upon its ‘unique history’ as an independent nation and traditions were evoked and used as reference points to buttress this claim as well as to forge a common sense of belonging within all the groups claiming to belong to this nation. Certain myths of origin, for instance the Makhel Theory which is often used to explain the common origin and the gradual dispersal of the various Naga tribes. Festivals like the Lui Ngai-ni (Seed Sowing Festival) and so on are popularly celebrated and promoted in order to give legitimacy to the national identity and instilled as sense of belongingness to the group. It is also a political strategy to further the cause of the movement, as Sussanne Schech and Jane Haggis (2000) in *Culture and Development A Critical Introduction*, observed. They pointed out that “…to forge a nation based on indigenous popular cultures and traditions, which marked its difference from the culture imposed by the colonial power” (2000: 118). In doing so a national identity based on shared history and experience, cultural practices such as language, religion, common origin and descent emerged. Aloysius in *Nationalism Without a Nation in India* also brings out vividly the cultural aspect of nationalism. When he noted “[a] crucial aspect of the articulation of any nationalist ideology is the intellectual construction of the nation as continuity from a hoary past. This conjuring up of the nation-to-be from out of a seemingly endless past, through nationalism has multiple functions: one, to give legitimacy to the nation which is made to appear as having always or nearly always existed; two, to indicate the ideological direction the nation is to take in future with its pasts as the model; and three, to draw the desired line of inclusion and exclusion within society, culture and history. It is this construction of a continuity from the past, through the present, towards the future that constitutes the identity of a people, the soul or genius of a nation” (1997: 154). He further goes on to add that “…the construction of histories and invention of traditions in nationalist contexts are intellectual activities of myth making in modern times.
whose political import far exceeds their factual content. Nationalist myth-histories follow more or less a general pattern: the longest possible genealogy is claimed for the society and culture, the continuity of the present with such antiquity is established non-problematically, antiquity itself is presented as glorious and golden, harmonious and peaceful in comparison with the present that needs to be transformed. The transition from the allegedly golden past to the present fallen state is attributed to factors perceived to be extraneous to the original genius of the culture, and the glorious past is then ideologically transported and projected into the future as the destiny of the people” (Ibid., 1997: 155).

4.8 Conclusion

The emergence and the consolidation of the middle class in a tribal society like the Tangkhuls of Manipur added a new dimension to the tribal identity in the contemporary society. Significantly their emergence not only spells contestation against tradition but more importantly the invention of traditions. In the context of the rapid transformation and change that many tribal societies are undergoing at present it is sociologically significant to note the sudden revival of many of the traditional practices of the society. What is particularly intriguing is the active role played by the middle class, a product of modern institutions and structures, in the invention of traditions. Theoretically such a phenomenon has a wide implication. For one it brings into a new focus on tradition and modernity which has long been seen as exclusively apart if not opposed to each other. It also validates the position maintained by many postcolonial theorists, which view colonialism mainly from the cultural context of power and representation while also arguing against the exclusive nature of tradition from the wider economic, cultural or political contexts.

The primary objective of the present chapter has been to highlight the various processes and contexts which have perpetuated the identity of tribe in India, particularly the role of the middle class as the modern myth makers. The claim in the study that the Naga national identity is invented by the nationalists composed mainly
of the middle class intellectuals and ideologues should not be seen as an attempt to de-legitimize the claim. On the contrary, the aim is to bring out how the claim to national identity in the context of anti-colonial struggle entails the invention of traditions. It is not the political goal to which the study focuses but the sociological processes of identity formation through the inventive use of tradition. It is perhaps to draw attention to what Rangers noted in his response to his critics in the context of African identity by pointing out that inventionist approach is ‘not to deny identity to Africans but to liberate them from the assumptions that African identities always have been and still are tribal’ (1999: 134 quoted in Sussanne and Schech, 132).
Reference


**End Notes**

1. To look after the tribal population coming within the new tribal sub-Plan strategy in a coordinated manner, Integrated Tribal Development Projects were conceived during Fifth Five Year Plan and these have been continued since then. During the Sixth Plan, Modified Area Development Approach (MADA) was adopted to cover smaller areas of tribal concentration and during the Seventh Plan, the TSP strategy was extended further to cover even smaller areas of tribal concentration and thus cluster of tribal concentration were identified.

2. The ITDPs are generally contiguous areas of the size of a Tehsil or Block or more in which the ST population is 50% or more of the total. On account of demographic reasons, however, ITDPs in Assam, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal may be smaller or not contiguous. Andhra Pradesh and Orissa have opted for an Agency model under the Registration of Societies Act and the ITDPs there are known as ITD Agencies (ITDAs). So far 194 ITDPs/ITDAs have been delineated in the country in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Orissa, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Union Territories of Andaman & Nicobar Island and Daman & Diu. In Jammu and Kashmir though no ITDP has been delineated yet the areas having ST Population in the State are treated as covered under the TSP strategy. In eight states having scheduled areas the ITDPs/ITDAs are generally co terminus with TSP areas. The ITDPs/ITDAs are headed by Project Officer though they may be designated Project Administrators or Project Directors.

3. These are identified pockets of concentration of ST population containing 50% or more ST population within a total population of minimum of 10,000. The total number of MADAs identified so far in the various TSP States is 259. Generally, MADA pockets do not have separate administrative structures to implement development programmes. The line Departments of the State Govt. are expected to implement development programmes in MADA pockets under the overall control of the District authorities.

4. These are identified pockets of tribal concentration containing 50% or more ST population within a total population of about 5,000 or more. As in the case of MADA pockets, there are no separate administrative structures for Clusters. So far 82 Clusters have been identified in various T.S.P. states.

5. All the government employed household residing in the village and simultaneously engaging in other occupations are those employed in the veterinary dispensary, government primary school or similar government offices in the neighbouring villages like Shingkap and Shingta as peons or attendants.
It was in this context that an old man from Marou reportedly said that the younger generation are least bothered about land now. They do not want to work on the land but spend time in the cities and towns (Marou, field survey, 2006).

In the past, it is said that whatever a person killed in a hunt, big or small, is distributed to the relatives and neighbours. Usually the distribution is like the head of the animal, say a deer, to the eldest surviving family head, the neck to the in-laws, the hind leg to the village Chief and so on. Those households who do not have active members are usually given a portion of the cooked meal.

The villagers are themselves aware of the fact that animal and wild fowls stock is dwindling. One often mentioned example is the case of a Tragopan or what is usually called in the local dialect as hangkh-o-khallang. It is said that in the olden days the birds used to feed on a particular kind of fruit in the Mapithel Range. The birds used to come from the Anko kaphung, local name for the Arrakan Range, during the winter months and stay on till the onset of spring. There are myths and stories woven around the visit of the birds. These myths and stories are gone so are the birds.

The notion of generosity among the Tangkhuls can be approached from a different point of view besides the functional one, which sees it as contributing to the enhancement of social solidarity and cohesion. Firstly, this would bring us to look at it from the environment perspective. It should be evident that almost half of the agricultural products of the Tangkhuls are perishable goods whose storage life is short given the fact that the Tangkhul country has a tropical kind of climate. With the absence of proper knowledge of storage regarding the perishable goods the best thing that a Tangkhul could do was to give communal feasting and gain in return social prestige which can be preserved for long. Similarly, mithun, regarded as the status symbol for the owner family is also perishable in a certain sense. This is because there is hardly any evidence of cattle sheds in the remote past. Mithuns are simply let free to roam in the forest. The owner from time to time visits the waterhole where the herd gathers. Thus, the animals are exposed to wild animals, which could devour them. Secondly, generosity can be understood as the socio-economic medium of ‘wealth’ accumulation in the sense that in the absence of money it (generosity) becomes the most practical means of ‘buying’ prestige and honour and hoarding it.

Dalton, Edward Tuite, *Tribal History of Eastern India*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1978. [Of the Naga females my recollections are, they are short, ugly and waist less; too hard worked perhaps to be beautiful.] p. 42. [The notion of beauty is contextual. Thus, for the Naga a beautiful woman is someone with thick bosoms, big thighs and calf muscles, dark and long hair, chubby face, and strong and tardy hands. This is so because these were the signs of the productive and procreative potentials of a woman, as regarded by the Nagas. Such a conception of beauty was functional for the society given the rough and physically challenging topography of the Naga country. However, the definition of beauty has been changed so drastically. The opposite of the traditional conception of beauty has
become the norm in the contemporary Tangkhul society. To be considered beautiful one has to be slim, fair, petite, and delicate in appearance and act. And this comes at a price because it necessitates the use of cosmetics whose price can be arbitrarily high. This notion of beauty is incompatible with the majority of the Tangkhuls who still lives in the village and practices the traditional occupation simply because they have neither the resource to spare for the expensive cosmetic items nor the knowledge of using the same. More importantly, taking to such standards have been counter productive as it has eroded the will to work in the jhum fields among most of the younger generations. Perhaps, these modern notions like the one discussed here still remains the most worrying aspect for the Tangkhul elders because they feel that the younger generation have been lured away from the ‘context’ and been smothering themselves by adopting such alien ideas and notions.

11 “Invented tradition” is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed overtly or tacitly be accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact where possible, they normally attempted to establish continuity with a suitable historic past....However, there is no such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of “invented” traditions is that the continuity with it is largely fictitious’ Hobsbawn 1983: 1-2 quoted in Sussanne Schech and Jane Haggis in Culture and Development A Critical Introduction. 2000, p. 129.)