Chapter Two

Cultural Practices of the Tangkhul Nagas:
Historical Encounters and Cultural Changes

One significant way of understanding the cultural practices of a community is to analyze the historical backgrounds and transitions that have taken place through the ages. Cultural practices are not isolated monoliths that remain unchanged when other areas of society have moved ahead. Those who have studied culture from various established disciplines have given differential importance to the myriad aspects of culture. According to Raymond Williams, in archaeology and cultural anthropology the reference to culture is primarily 'material production', whereas in history and cultural studies the reference is primarily to 'signifying or symbolic systems' (Williams, 1976: 91). This differential focus has often led to confusion and added to the complexities in the concept of 'culture'. However, as Raymond Williams affirms, the relations between 'material' and 'symbolic' productions have come to be seen in recent arguments as 'related rather than contrasted' (ibid). The usages of the concept of culture appear to be inclusive, rather than exclusive and restricted, and there is wide gamut of practices that came under the rubric of 'cultural practices'. Those who have given importance to the symbolic significance of culture have taken 'shared meanings, values attitudes and symbolic forms' as distinctive features of cultural practices (Burke, 1978a). Whether it is material productions in the form of artifacts or signifying practices like dance performance, the 'meaning' that is derived from such 'objects' and 'practices' can be considered as a distinctive feature which could be employed as a yardstick to differentiate culture from other aspects of society. What makes culture significant for analysis is that it is pervasive in everyday life and practiced by all members.

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1 Culture in its early usage, according to Raymond Williams, was a 'noun process'; the tending of something, basically crops and animals. According to him, there are three broad active category of usages of the term 'culture' since its adoption: (i) 'the independent and abstract noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, from 18th century, (ii) independent noun which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people or group; (iii) the independent and abstract noun, which describe the works and practices of intellectual, especially artistic activity (Williams, 1976: 90 – 91).
of community, irrespective of class and social positions. Therefore, the concept of culture as practice is intrinsically embedded with the lived experience of the people. The analysis of cultural practices of any community has to take this 'lived experienced' of culture into account.

The ambiguities in the concept of culture apparently come from the relations that it shares with other elements of society. There exists close relationships between religious beliefs and cultural practices, for example theater in India owes its origin to Ram Leela, and the ancient theatres of Greeks and Romans were all sacred practices, which later developed into a form of popular art. The Marxist philosophy of art has already changed the perspectives from the emphasis that holds art and aesthetic judgment as isolated and 'autonomous' moments, to one in which cultural practices are seen as rooted fundamentally in the social and political existence of men (Lang & Williams, 1972: 6). The most general and important principle of Marxism holds that 'all parts of ideological superstructure—art (and cultural practices) being one of these—are crucially determined in content and style by the behavior of a more basic structure which is economic in nature' (ibid). The thrust of Marx, according to Williams, insists that all cultural processes were initiated by humans themselves and none of them could be fully understood unless they were seen in the context of human activities as a whole (Williams, 1989). Though one may counter the Marxist position that 'economic structures' determine all other aspects of society, the interconnections between various elements of society and the holistic approach which they have established needs to be adopted. In those societies which had experienced colonial rule, the modes of intervention of the colonial state and Christian missionaries became a watershed in their history. It also became the 'base' of all forms of changes in the realms of culture, economy, and politics that has taken place in their society. As Malinowski (1945) has argued, Colonialism creates ruptures in tribal societies, through which directions in cultural practices in tribal societies began to change. After the experience of Colonial rule and acceptance of Christianity, the prevailing situation in tribal societies became less restrictive to new changes and more receptive to other cultures.
Dynamics of Tangkhuls' Past and Present

The Tangkhuls are a community that has experienced transitions from 'tradition' to 'modernity', and the processes of change are still continuing. Before the advent of Colonialism and subsequent arrival of Christian missionaries, the Tangkhuls were living relatively isolated from the rest of the world, except with some contacts with few neighboring communities like Meiteis, Kukis, other Naga tribes and the Burmese. During those periods the influence of exogenous forces on their social and cultural life was minimal and there was not much divergence in their age-old traditional beliefs and practices. While the Meiteis, who are settled in the valley areas of Manipur, had already accepted Hinduism and changes has taken place in their cultural practices; the Tangkhul Nagas, who shared close relationships with them, were still engaging in their old practices. Due to traditional practices like 'head-hunting' and the prevalent closed social structure of their society, most of their beliefs and practices were 'locality specific' (Eaton, 1984). To a large extent, their beliefs and practices do not expand beyond their community. Till the arrival of 'foreign rulers', not many changes had taken place in Tangkhul society. In the pre-colonial periods, it was not only the Tangkhuls, but in every tribe and community in Northeast the cultural expression reflected 'simple cultural patterns' with the tradition of folklores, music and dances, festivities, local myths and sacred lore which were 'symptomatic of their philosophy' (Aggarwal, 1996:14 -15). Along with the expansion of British colonialism to Assam, Manipur, and Burma after the treaty of Yadabo, the influence of Western culture began to penetrate Naga society.

The missionaries also came along with British colonialists, and began to take up massive Christianization works. These two agencies, the 'state' (Colonial and Independent) and 'non-state' (Missionaries and others), have served as a catalyst to transitions among the Tangkhul Nagas and most of the tribal communities in Northeast. The Colonial ruler adopted military measures and succeeded in establishing their domain and authority over the people, bringing significant changes in the political structure, economic life and developed the means of transport and communications (Shimreiwung, 2004). The durbars and courts were established to settle disputes and maintain 'law and order', which were deliberate strategies employed to legitimize the colonial authority. Monetary systems became the
medium of trade and exchange of goods, while traveling became easier because of better roads and transports. Along with establishment of schools, humanitarian measures, and disbursement of medical aids, the Christian missionaries succeeded in converting most of the tribes (Shimreiwung, 2004). The colonial period turned out to be an era when new changes began to take root in tribal society. For tribal societies, it became a point where disconnection between the ‘past’ and the contemporary world began. The new era began in Tangkhul society with the adoption of new forms of education, discarding their age-old morung\(^2\); embracing new beliefs systems and lifestyles; and adopting Western dressing patterns and houses. The encounter between the Colonial West and tribes in Northeast was a classic case where two civilizations met: between the far West and the ‘exotic’ East. What is striking here is the impact of this encounter; that a ‘few foreigners’ were able to transform the beliefs and practices of the easterners like never before. The Tangkhuls today have abandoned most of their traditional practices; their relationship with the ‘past’ is in the form of ‘nostalgia’, just a remembrance of what their forefathers were. While the new generations of Tangkhuls have marched ahead with their own interest and aims, their ‘past’ can be seen only in the residues of ‘folk-traditions’, which are still practiced by aged people in the villages. With the coming of new generations, change in beliefs systems, and political structure, the cultural practices of the Tangkhuls have undergone massive changes. The folk-traditions of the Tangkhuls came under serious challenge from different sectors. Therefore, to understand the transformations and changes in cultural practices of the Tangkhuls, it is pertinent to analyze their ‘folk-traditions’. The point of departure in their cultural practices begins with the acceptance of colonial power and Christianity. Meanwhile, folk-practices have become the only recognizable monoliths of their not too distant ‘past’.

Writings on the Tangkhuls: Colonial and Their Own

At this present juncture when most of the cultural practices of the Tangkhuls have either been Christianized or modernized, the reliable sources to their past are etched in the memories of the older members of community, who were born before the advent of

\(^2\) Morung was a youth dormitory where all the unmarried boys and girls stay until they get married and settle down. In traditional Naga society it also serves as an institution of learning, where all skills pertaining to various fields, such as hunting, weaving and singing etc. were imparted to the younger generations by senior members. After the adoption of Christianity, morung ceased to exist in Naga society as it was considered as a place of ‘vile and immoral activities’ by the Missionaries.
Christianity. Although, many accounts have been written about the Tangkhuls by the colonial agents and missionaries, and also by the new generations of Tangkhuls: however, the bias in perspectives in which these accounts were written is un-mistakably visible in most of the writings. James Clifford and George Marcus in *Writing Culture* have tersely pointed out the fallacies of anthropological writings about the distant societies (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Ironically, most of the early accounts of the Nagas during the colonial periods were written by administrative officers who had served as political agents and military officers, and one hardly came across any objective studies by academically trained anthropologists or social scientists. Therefore, in most of these ‘written accounts’ one can see that the ‘viewpoint’ of the administrator and the state remains prominent. However, one cannot help, but also take their accounts into considerations, as these accounts are the only sources that have been documented in the ‘written’ form.

Most of the Naga tribes lack substantive account of their past. And, there are some tribes, which the colonial authorities have not documented well. Political agents like J H Hutton, J P Mills and others have taken keen interest in writing the accounts about the tribes they were administering. Very few accounts are available about the Tangkhuls. The earliest account available on Tangkhuls is in R Brown’s *Statistical Account of Manipur*, published in 1874. This book is a compilation on the facts and figures of all the people living in Manipur that the Colonial authorities had collected, and not a systematic study of a particular community or tribe. In this book, we find the ‘official accounts’ of the Tangkhuls’ traditional practices and belief systems, which were practiced during the advent of British rule. Later on, T C Hodson, Assistant Political agent of Manipur, wrote *The Naga Tribes of Manipur* (1911), focusing exclusively on the Nagas living within the erstwhile princely state of Manipur. In this book he has documented some of the traditional beliefs and practices of the Tangkhuls, but the accounts are not comprehensive enough. Some Colonial administrators as well as Christian Missionaries have also written accounts on rituals and folklore of the Tangkhuls in academic journals. William Pettigrew, the first White missionaries among the Tangkhuls and in Manipur, had also made significant contributions to the knowledge on the Tangkhuls. However, most of these accounts are in the form of short articles and the information presented is limited. Later on, when modern education
system began to develop, the educated Tangkhuls began to write accounts about their own community.

Most of the early writings of Tangkhuls about their society are in their own language. English was a compulsory subject in the school and most of the schools had begun to adopt English as medium of instruction. However, the early Tangkhul writers prefer to choose Tangkhul language for most of their writing. Perhaps, their intention was to preserve and convey the knowledge about their community to the younger generation. They apparently had no intentions to tell their stories to others; but most of them had serious concern about the changes that were taking place in their society; the apprehension of losing their folk-practices and knowledge of their past was looming large. By the time Tangkhuls had started writing about themselves, their society had already been Christianized and their thoughts about themselves had changed. Somewhere between the lines in their writings, there is dislike for some of the ‘old traditions’ and deep feelings about the ‘past’ comes to the fore.

The first persons among the Tangkhuls to write in their own language were students of William Pettigrew. Before them, Pettigrew had written a number of books in Tangkhul on various areas, but these were concern mostly with religious texts and school books. But, so far the most important contribution of Pettigrew has been *Tangkhul Naga Grammar and Dictionary* (first published in 1918). This book is still used as a guidebook by writers in Tangkhul language.

Notable Tangkhuls among Pettigrew’s students who took up the task of writing were: S. Kanrei, T. Luikham and Y. K. Shimray. Most of their writings were in the form of poetry, folklore, religious texts, and novels, while attention was also given to document the past accounts and practices of Tangkhul society. T. Luikham published *Wung (Tangkhul) Naga* in 1961, which was followed by M. K. Shimray’s *Tangkhul Miwurlung* in 1967. These works were considered as the earliest books in Tangkhul, written by Tangkhuls about their society. Later on, Maya Gachui’s work *Hao, Miun Ngashan kala Tangkhul Khararchan*  

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3 Incidentally, most of these persons hailed from Ukhrul, the place where Pettigrew set up his first school and established his earliest Mission station in Manipur. The success of Pettigrew’s Mission work in Ukhrul became the backbone of Christianity in Manipur, the methods and strategies that he employed here were replicated to other tribes and communities.
(History and Culture of the Tangkhuls) has been considered as one of the authoritative accounts of Tangkhuls. A host of other Tangkhul authors have also written about their religion, customary laws and various other subjects. R R Shimray, Dr. Khashim Ruivah and Prof. M Horam and other Tangkhul scholars have written in English and made the history and culture of the Tangkhuls known to outsiders. The Tangkhul writers have presented the factual details and accounts which have been neglected by others, and recorded all the archaic names and terminologies. Their finding include knowledge about the tribe which has been set aside by the Colonial researchers. Their position of being an ‘insider’ had put them in an advantageous position and accessible to all the necessary information. In Tangkhuls writing of their own, the indigenous perspective was put forward and we also find justifications for traditional practices. However, the deficiencies in Tangkhuls writing about their own society are characterized by subjective biases. In most of the Tangkhuls writing, they have flaunted their excessive adoration about their past and culture. The writings on Tangkhuls, by both the ‘outsiders’ and the ‘insiders’, have enriched the knowledge about Tangkhuls. However, most of the writings are in ‘ethnographic’ form, so far the theoretical analysis about their social relationships and practices are still lacking. Furthermore, the ‘external’ and ‘internal’ bias still remains in most of the writings on Tangkhuls.

Folk-traditions: Monoliths from the Past

On the way to the paddy field in Ramva village, there is a popular resting place where villagers halt for sometime before reaching the field and while coming back from work. The Tangkhuls popularly called it ‘wonrah’ (a viewpoint and resting place) and it is found in every village. In Ramva village, the wonrah is surrounded on both sides by megaliths, which were erected in the past. It was a common tradition among the Tangkhuls to erect monolith, with a tall rock standing on the head of the rectangular shaped platform, which resembles modern day cemetery. It is told that such monoliths were erected as a form of remembrance for the deceased by their family, usually built after a year the person had passed away. The villagers just accepted that viewpoint without giving much attention to the significance of the monoliths being erected there. The Ramva villagers no longer erect such monoliths or tree poles as they used to do in the past. And the significance of such artifacts
and practices has diminished in their society. The overall perception of the people on such remnants of the past indicates how much the community has transformed over the years. Also, it indicates what is left of the folk culture of Tangkhuls at present period. The folk traditions of the Tangkhuls have resembled the monoliths on the roadside. Although admired by the people and a reminder of their past, it has lost its relevance and significance in the society.

The Tangkhuls were a folk people in the past, and their folk-practices shared intricate relations with occupation, belief systems, and social structure. Though they were extremely fond of merry-making and community activities; feasts and festivals were not just about celebrations and entertainments, there was ‘reason’ and ‘meaning’ to every feast. The reasons could be an incidence like success in raids and war expeditions, or agricultural activities such as seed sowing and harvest. Tangkhuls’ folk-practices were closely related with agricultural cycle, and most of their religious rites also were concerning with good harvest and prosperity (Shimray 2000: 134). They were agriculturists during the pre-colonial and colonial period (Hodson, 1911:39), and most of their population still depends on agriculture for their livelihood. In the traditional practices of the Tangkhuls, every stage of agricultural cycle was preceded or followed by a festival. And, at every festival community feasting was a common practice. Singing folksongs and performance of folkdance constitutes an integral part of their celebrations. However, they have numerous folksongs for different festivals and occasions. Similarly, different styles of folkdances were performed for every occasions and festivals. Therefore, Tangkhuls’ folksong and folkdances were intimately connected with day-to-day activities as well as important occasions. The significance and ‘meanings’ of folksong and folkdance can only be comprehended through the relations that it shares with other activities and practices.

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4 There is no account about the history of Tangkhuls’ occupation, thus when agriculture began in their society is not known. However, by the time the Colonial ruler arrived, they were already practicing agricultural production. There are two types of agricultural cultivation: Ngara Lui (terrace field) and Ahan Lui (jhum field). Recently, the educated Tangkhuls have taken up non-agricultural professions; modern education systems and economic development have helped them to change their occupation.

5 The seed sowing is preceded by Luirra Phanit, plantation of seeds (in case of terrace cultivation) is followed by Mangkhap or Songkhap Phanit and harvest is preceded by Thareo.

6 However, community feasting may not always be a festival, there were occasions where community feast were limited to one clan and few families and it could be only for family matters such as childbirth or naming ceremony (Shimray 2000:134).
The tunes of singing style are not much in Tangkhul folksongs. Rewben Mashangva described that the ‘melodies of Tangkhul folksongs and music are predominantly of pentatonic scales’, and the styles of singing are varied, while most of the songs are sung with subtle slurring (Mashangva, 2001: 7). Group singing is the popular way of performing folksongs; however, solo performance are becoming more prominent. Tangkhul folksongs are divided into various categories, specially pertaining to the occasions it has to be sung. Some of the numerous categories of folksongs are: Tantak laa (songs for journey to the paddy field), Meisum laa (courting songs), Kanrei laa (songs for dry season), Luira laa (seed sowing songs), Shimsak laa (songs for construction of house), Maran laa (songs for feast of merit), Luisao laa and Luishom laa (songs for ploughing and seed plantations), Naokhot laa (lullaby), Pet laa (bed songs), Chapchat laa (songs of tears and sorrows), Zingkum laa (seasons’ song, heralding new season or year) and etc. (Shimray 2000: 91 – 92). Thus, in traditional practices of the Tangkhuls, there were songs for every important events and festivals. According to Rewben Mashangva, “there were songs for community works; as far practicable, work songs were sung rhythmically and in synchronization with the physical action so that the labour may become more of a fun’ (Mashangva, 2001: 7). Singing was an activity that was completely intertwined with all the social and agricultural activities. although, it was an art, it does not exist outside the realms of social life and activities of everyday. Apart from singing, according to Mashangva, ‘there is another form of musical expression in the style of non-lyrical harmonic chanting known as ‘khamahon’\(^7\), which can be described as ‘pulsation of successive chordal voices looped in a sequence’ (ibid). Further, in the course of a ‘khamahon’, there is an occasional burst of loud sustained cry with a tremolo effect which is known as ‘kakahang’ (ibid).

Folksongs were not uniformly sung by all Tangkhuls, regional differences exist in tuning and singing styles of folksongs, but the meanings of the songs could be comprehended by all (ibid). Although, each Tangkhul village has a dialect which cannot be understood by far flung villages, Rewben Mashangva describe that the ‘lyric of the song were such that it was understood by most villages’ (Mashangva, 2001: 5). The singing styles of each region is identified with the region’s name. The regional differences were basically

\(^7\) Khamahon and kakahang were frequently enacted during folkdance performances; it serves as the rhythmic balance for body movements. However, these forms of performances were quite common while working in the field and in other activities as well.
concerning with singing styles; and not always the type of folksongs. However, regional variation in cultural practices is not a unique case of the Tangkhuls alone. Franz Boas has stated that ‘uniformity’ in art could hardly be found, even if similarities are found in some feature of arts of all the society across the world, however ‘in detail there are great variations’ (Boas, 1940: 502). In Tangkhul folksongs, ‘tune likeness and differences are strongly based on [the geographical] location [of the village] and its proximity with the others’ (Shimray, 2000:93). The closed nature of social relationships between various villages and regions of the Tangkhuls, and differences in spoken dialect must have been the major factors which had promoted regional variations. The internecine conflict between the villages had also hampered and obstructed free interactions and interrelations among the people in the past. Further, in the absence of any form of mass media, ‘common culture’ and uniformity in cultural practices are unlikely to be emerged. But, still then, there were certain cultural practices which were common to all the Tangkhuls across the regions.

Laa Khanganui (Folksong singing competitions), an inter-village cultural activity, was one of such practices which was practiced by all the villages in different regions. Laa Khanganui was usually a significant part of Lui ra phanit (seed sowing festival), some authors and elders have referred to this practice as 'virgin dance' as only the virgin girls are supposed to take part in this communal dance (Shimray 2000:141-143). This was an occasion where 'beauty contest' was held and considered as the most apt opportunity for mate selections. Whenever Laa khanganui was held in a particular village, youths from neighboring villages thronged the hosting village to witness the beauty of girls and to choose their prospective bride, and they also took part singing folksongs. Folksong competitions among the male youths constitute an interesting feature of this joyous event. It was a well-established social institution where melodious folksongs were sung, for entertaining the entire community and singing skills were robustly showcased for the pleasure of discerning listeners. Most of the youths had already mastered the skills of singing by the time they became a member of Morung. And, it was through these social institutions like Morung and Laa khanganui that Tangkhuls were able to maintain their folk-practices over a long period in the past.
The text and lyrics of the Tangkhul folksongs speaks about various themes and issues. But, the most popular theme has been ‘love songs’, which comes under the category of Meishum laa (courting songs) and Lungchan laa (sentimental love songs). Usually, these songs were mostly sung during Yarra phanit (youth festival), however songs of such common theme were also sung throughout the year and in different occasions. Folksongs were sung not only during the festivals or special occasions; they took great delight in singing while working in the fields as well. There were special categories of songs which have to be sung while working in the paddy field, such as Luishom laa (plantation songs) and Luisao laa (ploughing song). There were songs which they have to be sung at the beginning of the work, during noontime, and at the end of their work. The progress of the work and day was accompanied by the songs. Usually, they work in groups, and everyone was supposed take part in singing.

Folksongs are narratives of an incidence which has taken place in the past; often the lyrics of the songs were intimately connected with the stories and folklore. Folksong also tells a story, and it constitutes an ingredient part of story-telling and narrations. There is an intricate relationship between the text of Tangkhul folksongs and folktales. Folksongs make the body of the folklore complete by forming a part of the tale. And the tale remains incomplete without the songs being presented. Folksongs act as a ‘sub-text’ to the ‘text’ of folktales; and folktales serves as the larger context for folksongs. In the past, folksongs were also claimed to be employed as a means of communication – people talk with each other through songs, using singing as a form of conversation, instead of speaking in words. Thus, usages of folksongs were not concentrated to a specific practice or occasion, but also in every other aspect of their social and cultural life.

The folk practices of the Tangkhuls were varied and each type of practice was divided into various categories depending on the significance of the occasions and events.

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8 The authorship of folksongs remains unknown to all members of society. The answer to questions of authorship of folksongs is that these songs were already there from time immemorial and they learned it from their forefathers. Often, the subject or protagonist of the story and incidents were considered as the composer and authors of that song. Thus, the author and text in most of the folksongs were inextricably interwoven.

9 According to Boas, “two fundamental forms, song and tale, are found among all the people of the world and must be considered the primary forms of literary activity” (Boas, 1940: 491).
Folkdance was another cultural practice which was divided into different categories, pertaining to the nature of the occasions it was to be performed. The pattern and movements of dance differs in 'war dance' and dance of seed sowing festivals (Khamuiwo, 1999: 100). As it was in singing folksongs, folkdance calls for participation of the entire community. Even the audiences or onlookers participate in the dance performance by taking part in body movements and shouting in rhythmic voice (khamahon). In every form of folk practice, participation of the entire village community was a distinctive feature. The demarcations between audience and 'actors' was very slim; such concepts were absent in their traditional practices. In every folkdance performance, there were equal numbers of male and female, there were no individual or solo performances, all dances were in groups. Such representation of gender equations symbolizes the prevailing marriage system in Tangkhul society – i.e. monogamy. The movements of folkdances were strictly based on the uniform rhythm of footsteps which is accompanied by voice. The uniformity in body movements of all the dancers, irrespective of gender and age, indicates the unity of their society and social equality. It also implies that there was no space for individualism in their social set-up. Thus, the structure and body movements of dance in Tangkhul society had dramatic semblance with the prevalent social structure and customary practices.

Story telling was an art in itself in traditional Tangkhul society. The act of narration was usually performed by an old lady or a man, while the young children formed the curious listeners. It was functioning as a medium through which history and knowledge about social customs and morals were imbibed to the younger generation. The role of narrator was also taken up by the parents, and in Morung (youth dormitory) it was done by the senior members. Tangkhul folktales are difficult to be categorized totally as 'myths' or 'lores'. Folktales concerned with 'creation', 'origin' and about the 'spirits' have mythical features. With the changes in society, old 'myths' began to lose significance. In the past, all 'myths' were firmly part of structures of the codified belief systems and it forms an important element of their religious practices. Each village had its share of folktales, about its own brave warriors, epic love stories, and pertaining to the history of their village. Since the Tangkhuls didn't have any script of their own, these tales were all recorded in 'memory' and

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10 According to U G Bower, narration of folklore involves a great deal of artistic elements; "The stress, the balance, the skilled suspense, the particular use of the beat and repetition were the voice of folklore" [Bower, 1952:125].
passed on to the younger generation through oral narration. Like the folksong, the
authorship of every folktale remains unknown, rather it was the community who creates the
‘text’ and kept it in possession. Some categories Tangkhuls folktales can be considered as
actual records of the past; tales with clear identification of the character’s clan, village and
realistic situation were indeed about the incidents that have taken place. Since written
culture was undeveloped, memories and remembrance of past incidents and narratives of
those incidents would simultaneously become a folktale for generations to come.

Popular Tangkhul folktales were shared by all villages, cutting across regions. The
tragic love story of Shimreishang and Maitonphi was one of such popular folktale, which
is still popular among the Tangkhuls even today. In this tale, the social position of the
characters, their clan membership, and village were well identified. And even the
circumstances involved were realistic; no supernatural traits were attributed to the ‘hero’
and ‘heroine’, except that their ‘beauty’ and ‘manliness’ were metaphorically presented.
And there are some strong indications to prove that such episodes had taken place in that
particular village, as that village and kinship still remains. There were also some tales that
takes the names and characters of animals, and men/women having relationship with animal,
or men transformed into an animal. The animals represented in tales, although they carried
their traits, have close resemblance with human nature and behaviors. The animal tales were
apparently a ‘dramatic representation’ of human nature and dynamics, rather than the actual
stories of animal kingdom or their relationships. But what animal folktales intent to convey
was a ‘moral lesson’ to be learnt and tried to apply it in real human situation. And also
animal tales indicate the ‘man-animal’ relationship, and represents the established bond that
exists between men and animals.

Folktales were not merely a ‘story’, narratives of some events or incidents or fantasy
world. It had close connections with the beliefs systems and myths of the community. Even

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Shimreishang was a handsome man of a respectable noble family of Zimik clan in Phungcham village, while
Maitonphi belongs to a family of low status and lived in the same village. They fall deeply in love with each
other, but their marriage was opposed by Shimreishag’s family as Maitonphi belongs to low status family,
and lacking in respect. Finally, Maitonphi was married off to another man from a different village. While
Maitonphi died during childbirth, after sometime Shimreishang also passed away because of heartbreak.
However, their relationships continued in another world – Kazelram (the world of dead).
the act of narrating and listening was a significant part of socialization process and a learning experience. It was a record well kept about the past, and the actual events that have taken place. It shows and explains the relationships that prevail between men and his surroundings, with the forest and animals. Often, the complexities of folktales go beyond the 'text' and moves into real life situation; maintaining an equilibrium in the social domain as well as the environment that surrounds them.

Festivals and communal feasts constitute an integral part of folk-traditions of the Tangkhuls. Although Tangkhuls were considered as hard working people, and their occupations were predominantly based on manual work, their festivals were un-usually long. Their time could well be separated into 'work time' and festival time. Festivals time has been considered as a 'time' when rules that are followed during the normal occasions are not applied. It was supposed to be a time when restrictions were kept in abeyance and 'rules' were meant to be broken. During the festivals as also in other occasions, there was no restriction on interactions between the sexes, man and woman dance and sing together. In some occasions, they dance for a whole night, until they were exhausted (Brown, 1874: 42). The best wine and rice beer were prepared well in advance before the festivities began; elaborate arrangements were made to ensure that no shortages happen. Whatever maybe the nature of festival, excessive consumption of food and drink was a common feature in every festival (Horam, 1977: 40). And there were some festivals where feasting was more prominent than other activities, such as Maran Kasa (feast of merit). In feasting ceremonies, the question of maintaining etiquette does not arise, as the guests had been invited especially to partake in the grand feast prepared for them. Apart from the festivals pertaining to agricultural activities, and feast of merit, there were host of other festivals which had its own significance. Thisam (festival of the dead) was one of the major

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12 Some festivals like Lira (seed sowing fest) last more than a week; each day was devoted to a particular activity, and ritual.
13 Feast of merit (Maran Kasa) was a festival that was practiced by almost all the Naga tribes. Any rich man desirous to enhance his position in the society organized a grand feast for the community. The status and position of man depends on the numbers of such feast he has performed for the society. In this event, communal feasting was a major feature, where every guest tried to enjoy the food as much, and the host did all that he could to entertain the guest.
14 This festival was based on their beliefs that even if a person is dead his /her souls continues to live with the family, until the soul is sent-off with a parting ceremony with elaborate rituals. Therefore, on this festival all the dead people were given an emotional farewell by their family and villagers.
festivals of the Tangkhuls. On this festival, the souls of the dead were given an emotional sending-off ceremony. Again, the dead were remembered by constructing Onrah (platform with a monolith) on the roadside as a symbol of affection for them (Shimray, 2000: 170-71). There was intricate connection between these festivals and cultural activities such as folksongs and folkdances; as in each festival there were certain songs to be sung and specific dances to be performed.

Common folk-practices like festivals, feast of merit (Maran Kasa) and folkdance and folksongs were catalyst to the cultural practices of the Tangkhuls. There was symbiotic relationship between occupation, political systems, food habits, and economy with their cultural practices. Any divergence in one of the elements of their society was bound to subvert the equilibrium that was maintained by these relationships in their society. The delicacy involved in this case was not seriously observed by the ‘outsiders’ and the ‘agencies’ that had intervened their society. What emerges after the destruction of this symmetry was the world turned upside down (okathui kaphalat). But, folk-traditions continue to be a custodian of the past, and remnants of the old domain. As changes sweep other areas of Tangkhul society, it became difficult for the folk-traditions to remain unchanged. It had to yield to stronger forces and fall in line with the changing scenarios by taking a new avatar and now form a significant part of the new order that has been established.

Encounters with the Colonial Power and Christian Missionaries

The arrival of Colonial power heralded a new era in the history of the tribals in the far flung areas of Northeast India. The intention of the Colonial power was to subdue and control the ‘warring tribes’ who had caused much trouble for them by conducting frequent raids. It was their interest to safeguard the colonies and plantations in Assam valley that had compelled them to go to the Hills and deal with them directly\textsuperscript{15}. Their attentions to the hill

\textsuperscript{15} With the signing of the Treaty of Yadabo in 1826, most of the major principalities in Northeast including Assam, Manipur, and the Burmese empire had submitted before the British authority. And it brought the British Colonial Empire into direct confrontation with the Hill tribes, even if the power in the valley areas had already submitted to their authority; the Hill tribes refused to give up easily.
tribes were generated from the insecurity of their economic venture in the valley and their strategy in the early period was characterized by ‘defense of the lowlands’ (Serna, 1991: 5). However, their penetration into the Hill areas turned out to be a ‘historical encounter’, as these ‘warring’ tribes had never confronted a Westerner and they had never been put totally ‘under control’ by any superior authority in the past. In the initial period of the colonial era, the mode of intervention of the Colonial power was the employment of brutal force through ‘punitive actions’ and the Hill tribes resisted with all the vigor that they had. The colonial officers described the nature of relationship in the initial fifty years as ‘long sickening period of open insult and defiance, bold outrages and cold-blooded murders on the one side, and long suffering forbearance, forgiveness, concessions, and unlooked for favor on the other’ (Woodhorpe, 1882). This account gave us a one-sided story from the colonial administrator’s point of view. To them, the relationship that they sought was good enough and they expected the tribals to respond in the same manner. The act of resistance and defiance of the Hill tribes was considered as the way of the ‘savage’ and their inability to respect their authority was ‘un-civilized’. But, what was taken into account was that these so-called ‘barbarous-savages’ (Godden, 1897) had always resisted any attempt of the ‘outsiders’ who had tried to conquer their territory. And, any attempt to penetrate into their domain, whether by force or not, was in itself an act of war. Thus, their act of ‘defiance’ was a political move aimed at safeguarding their independent way of life, and not necessarily ‘savagery’. The colonial authority and Hill tribes had different code of law, and they seem to have misunderstood one another. But, it was clear on the part of the Hill tribes that whatever the colonial power was attempting would definitely destroy their political status. And the colonial authorities were exactly aiming for that: subjugation and domination over the Hills. Therefore, whether the intervention of the Colonial power was in the form of ‘official tour’ or ‘punitive expeditions’, the Hill tribes ‘fearless with their courage of savage ignorance’, ‘repeatedly resisted and killed the officers engaged in frontier works’ (Godden, 1897). In the initial period, the relationships between the Colonial power and Hill tribes were characterized by intense political struggle for domination and resistance. The encounter in the Hills turned out to be more difficult for the colonial power as they remain clueless about the appropriate strategy to deal with them.
The categories like ‘savage’ and ‘barbaric’ were deliberately employed by the Colonial power to justify the course of actions that they have undertaken in the Hill areas (Misra, 1998). They avowedly declared that their policy in dealing with the ‘wild tribes’ was guided by ‘non-interference’ in their internal affairs. However, in the long run, the encounters between the Colonial power and Hill tribes changed the polity, economy, and cultural practices of these tribes massively. What opened up the road was their strategy of introducing British administrative systems and giving free hand to the Missionaries to carry out their work. The colonial policy of ‘non-interference’ did not last long enough; due to the aggravating situations created by frequent raids, their policy changed towards direct control and they took part in the internecine conflict. The British administration established their station in Naga areas, and gave security to some villages as ‘protectorates’ (Sema, 1991). They imposed taxes on Naga villages which had accepted their authority, and in turn gave them security from rival villages.\footnote{The taxes were collected from the fully administered areas, whereas for those villages outside the purview of their administration they followed different policy (Sema 1991).} Taxes were collected not necessarily for the economic reasons or service rendered, but to accept their authority and remain lawful to the dictates of the Colonial power. It was just a symbolic manifestation of the larger interest. The position of the village chief was also utilized as ‘representative of the colonial administrations’ and his ‘powers and functions’ were ‘determined by the government’ (ibid). There was complete transformation in the political structure as Naga chiefs, who had vast authority in the village administration, was made an abiding ‘representatives’ of an ‘external authority’. In the Colonial administered zone, disputes were settled by the Colonial officers and law and order were maintained by them. From the beginning the Colonial power had massive concern about maintaining law and order, which invariably means following their directives. Law and order was the crux of their mission and most of their administrative policy was directed towards this end. To the Colonial authority, the independent tribal way of life was a case of complete chaos. Therefore, their intention was to bring ‘order’ in tribal societies by introducing different administrative systems, by which the tribes had to pay taxes, go to their courts for settling disputes, and followed their directives. The state of existence of the Hill tribes was considered as a complete anti-thesis of the ‘orderly’ civilized world of the colonial ruler. Therefore, the need for intervention from outside agencies and changes in every aspect of the tribes ostensibly became a necessary process. Thus, the ‘main thrust of cultural project of colonialism’ was not ‘affirmation’ of the native practices, but ‘change’ (Pannikar, 2003).
**Governing the 'Frontier'**

The areas inhabited by Hill tribes in the Northeast were classified as 'frontier' regions of the Colonial dominion. It was prominently done to identify as a marker for the extent of their empire on the map. What does frontier mean in the modern geographical language is that it represents "precisely defined lines on the map (and on the ground), marking the exact division between two adjacent states" (Leach, 1960). And 'most of such frontiers' are the "outcome of arbitrary political decision or military accidents" (ibid). Those areas classified as 'frontier' also implied the absence of well organized native political systems or 'state' (in the Western political terms). Such areas were open for conquest and control for the Colonial powers. The Colonial authority considered the Nagas as lacking in any organized polity and reduced their way of life to 'total anarchy' and 'absence of law'. And the direct consequence of such assumption was massive division of Naga society without their consent. For the convenience of administrative purposes, the Naga areas were arbitrarily divided and put under the jurisdiction of different durbars created by the Colonial power. After the formation of the British District of Naga Hills, the remaining Naga areas, which were outside this purview, were further divided among the princely state of Manipur, Assam and NEFA (presently Arunachal state) and the eastern side were left to Burma (Sema 1991: 52).

Some scholars have argued this division of Naga areas as another 'Divide and Rule' policy of the British Empire. And those Nagas who were living in the southern regions, including the Tangkhul Nagas and various other Naga tribes were arbitrarily put under the dominion of the Manipur durbar without their consent. In those Naga areas which were placed under the control of princely state, most of the responsibilities for governance were given to the state, even those relating to local governance. The divisions of Naga areas indicate that state formation in Northeast India has not been based on cultural affinities or ethnic relations, but purely for administrative convenience and on the presumption that 'monarchical authority' in the valley had suzerainty over the 'hill tribes'.

In the princely state of Manipur, where the Colonial ruler was trying to extend its influence and used the region as a passage to Burma, the 'numerous hill tribes' were

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17 With the political assertion of the Nagas, currently there is strong movement for the integration of all Naga inhabited areas under one administrative system.
considered as "almost entirely independent" and "in constantly at feud with themselves and with Manipur" (Brown, 1874: 71). With the introduction of firearms during the Burmese war, the Manipur Raja with the aid of Colonial ruler was able to control these tribes. R. Brown described that "Amongst the whole of hill tribes at this period the Tonkhuls and Luhupas were the most troublesome, occasionally making raids into the valley itself, but, like all hill-men; afraid to quit the shelter of their hills for any distance" (Brown, 1874: 71).

The relationship that Nagas in the south had with the princely state of Manipur was similar to the relationship between Assam and Nagas in the north. Naga tribes' frequent raids in the valley were routine war-games which immensely enthralled them. It was not based on the politics of conquest and domination, which the princely state and colonial powers desperately sought. In the initial period, the British authority had given full responsibility and burden to Manipur Raja in controlling the 'hill tribes'. Their interference was in the forms of supplying fire-arms and, in some occasions, collaborations with local Raja in subduing the hill tribes. Later, after a few years of this agreement, Manipur was put under direct British rule in 1891 and extensive reforms were implemented in administration, judiciary, police (Singh, 2002). Tax collection was also increased by almost double in the Valley and Hill areas (ibid). Whenever a new territory was put under their domination, the Colonial power had always changed the existing systems and introduced new reforms. The questions of 'inferior' and 'superior' administrative systems had been the crux of most of these changes. There were some exceptional British Political Agents who had made significant contributions to the development of native people. On the initiative of James Johnstone, British political agent in Manipur, a school was established in Manipur in 1885, which ushered a new beginning in the history of education in Manipur (Singh, 2002: 68). Even though Manipuris had their own script, illiteracy was prevalent, and the high ranking officers were also not literate enough (Brown, 1874). Due to the influence of Hinduism, the Manipuris had started to adopt Bengali script before the colonial period; which was later extended to the Hill areas as well.

The marked differences in cultural traits and living conditions between the Hill tribes and communities in the valley had apparently influenced British policy towards them (Mishra, 1998). When the British succeeded in gaining direct control of the entire region, they setup a different policy for the Hill areas and the Hinduised valley communities.
cultural differences of hill tribes and valley communities were differentiated implicitly in terms of ‘civilized plains’ and ‘barbarians in the hills’ (ibid). Whereas, there was apprehension on the part of the colonial policy makers that cultural practices of the hill tribes would be annihilated by the more developed neighboring communities. This apprehension and the colonial objective of protecting the tribes resulted in the promulgation of Inner Line Regulation in 1873. Considering that the hill tribes were more backward than their neighboring communities and imminent threat of cultural domination was looming large, the Colonial powers adopted the policy of ‘protectionism’ towards these tribes (Sema 1991: 64). They also took some ‘practical measures like prohibiting Nagas from wearing ‘dhotis’, short pants, and petticoat (ibid). The British colonial administrator wanted to preserve the ‘exotic’ culture of the Nagas, and make them remain as they were. Therefore, there was an attempt to isolate the Nagas from their neighboring communities, so that they would be safeguarded from the influence of Hinduism. The consequence of this policy was that most of the Nagas have not embraced Hinduism; rather they have fully accepted Christianity, and this was on Colonial ruler’s agenda. Even though, the colonial policy of ‘protectionism’ somehow achieved in safeguarding the hill tribes from the influence of Hinduism and cultural practices of the valley communities, it also disturbed the bonds that was in existence between the hill and valley. This blanket ban on interaction between various communities on the basis of their cultural difference created a wall between them, which in turn ushered a different form of dynamics in the realm of inter-community relationships. The mode of ‘sharing culture’ across the community boundary was disrupted by the promulgation of new colonial laws and policy of protectionism. There were cases where some Tangkhul villages that shared closed relations with the Meiteis were using the Manipuri term for months and year. However, with the intervention of colonial power, shared practices between hill and valley were transformed. As a result the differences between hill and valley culture began to widen during the colonial period.

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18 The Inner Line Regulation (1873) was introduced to prevent incidents of conflicts between the tribal people and the plainsmen. The regulation was drawn up to prescribe a line, to be called the ‘Inner Line’, in each or any districts affected (by the feuds), beyond which no British subject of certain classes or foreign residents could pass without a license. Rules regarding trade, the possession of land beyond the line, and other matters were also laid down (Kikon, 2003).

19 The Tangkhuls had their own terms for months and years, but the interaction with the valley communities has influence them in marking the time. In one of the interviews an old woman recalled the names of months and year in Manipuri before the arrival of missionaries and colonial power.
The intervention of colonial power in tribal society had also affected their economic systems. The massive use of currency and collection of taxes in the form of cash compels the tribes to comply with the colonial system and to integrate with the economic transactions and wealth accumulation. The tribal communities encounter with colonial power can be seen as the form of interactions between two different modes of economic systems – tribal economy based on pre-capitalist systems and the British East India Company representing as capitalist agent. In this circumstances the ‘transfer of value from pre-capitalist formation to capitalist formation takes place’ (Sikdar, 1982). Transformation in tribal economic systems also served as a catalyst to change in their lifestyles and cultural practices, as they began to adorn themselves with western dresses and also emulate them in various ways. Monetary systems were introduced in trade relations, which had existed between the local communities and outsiders. Which subsequently led to commercialization of goods and destruction of barter system in trade relations.

Although the colonial power has not directly interfered with the religious beliefs and practices, it took necessary measures to remove certain social evils and practices associated with customs and traditions of the Nagas (Sema 1991: 60). Headhunting was one of the practices of the Nagas which the colonial power had taken seriously; it was not only an act of ‘savagery’ but it poses an immense threat to their domination. Therefore, the colonial authority had taken ‘direct measures’ to stop this practice. The difference between headhunting and raiding was differentiated by the colonial administrators on the basis of its motives: that raiding was purely for capturing slaves and wealth, where as headhunting was supposed to gain prestige and spiritual significance (Zou, 2005). Initially, headhunting was considered as less problematic than raiding; later on headhunting was banned as a part of the colonial project of ‘rationalization of cultural practices’ and to ‘produce gradual reformative influence on the Nagas’ (Sema 1991: 60). Slavery was another practice which was banned during the colonial period; it was practiced by some Naga tribes. But, no mention of slavery among the Tangkhul Nagas has been made; it is also not mentioned in their oral history and folktale.
The colonial power had interfered in tribal society at various levels, employing various means, and intruded into their cultural practices and social life. Modifications and rationalization of tribal practices by the colonial administrators had already set the stage for the arrival of other agencies. Most of the historians have pointed out that the introduction of Christianity has been the most significant step for transformation of tribal societies. There have been various debates about the motives of the colonial power's introduction of Christianity to the tribals and the relationships between missionaries and colonial power. The missionaries were looking for a 'field' for carrying out their 'mission', where as the colonial power were searching for other means to subdue the 'wild tribes' and also change their way of life. The invitation to Missionaries to come to the hills had served dual purposes for the colonial power: 'expansion' of the colonial domain and pacifying the 'wild tribes' in the colonial administered area. Problems in dealing with the Nagas and other hill tribes because of their political defiance had made the colonial power to consider Christian missionaries as a viable option, which would be more effective than gun-powder. The missionaries were considered as fitter than soldiers for dealing with Nagas as they were like pagans (Misra 1998). Whereas, the colonial ruler had no intention in disturbing the religious sentiments of the Hinduised communities in Manipur and Assam valleys, the colonial administrators in the Northeast had no hesitation in inviting the missionaries, and had gone to the extent of giving financial help and security coverage. On the other hand, Christian missionaries had not only worked hand-in-hand with the colonial ruler but worked under their patronage. Pioneer missionaries like E. W Clark and William Pettigrew were not just Christian workers but they had closely associated with colonial administrators; they had gone to the extent of collaborating in the administrative functions and implementing colonial policy. Therefore, there was not much difference between a 'mission station' and the colonial administrative centre. Ukhrul, the district headquarter of the Tangkhuls, had been the centre for the British administrators and Christian missionaries for a long time. Places like Kohima, Aizawl etc were all centre of British colonial power as well as the mission workers. It indicates how closely the colonial ruler and missionaries had aligned together to achieve their mission in the Northeast.

20 During the Second World War, the Missionaries have helped the colonial master in recruiting Labor corps for their war in Europe. Thousands of Nagas were sent to France to help the British army, among them many were early converts and close associates of the missionaries.
Early Missionary works in Tangkhul Tribe

William Pettigrew, a Scottish Missionary, arrived in Manipur in 1894, passing through Bengal with the intention of establishing his mission base in the valley: the hill tribes were not his targets. The massacre of 1891, in which seven British officials were killed by the Manipuris, attracted his attention to Manipur; he applied for permission to enter the state to work among the Manipuri Hindus, but it was not until January, 1894 that permission was granted (Solo & Mahangthei, 2006: viii). However, soon after Pettigrew had settled in Imphal, the British political agent in Manipur gave him ultimatum to leave the place or go to hills. Because of the political turmoil in Manipur valley, proselytisation was considered as a dangerous step by the colonial administrators; therefore Pettigrew turned his attention towards the Tangkhul Nagas. There are various accounts on Pettigrew’s decision to work with the Tangkhuls: the first one says that he went to Kuki village to seek permission for carrying out his mission work, but it was turned down by the Kuki chiefs; secondly his attempt among the Mao Nagas also failed, thirdly it was Major Maxwell who had suggested to Pettigrew that he work with the Tangkhuls (Lolly, 1985: 22 – 23). Whatever maybe the reason behinds Pettigrew’s decision to work with Tangkhuls instead of various other tribes in Manipur, the socio-political environment appears to be most favorable for him, as colonial officials were ready to co-operate in his endeavor and his request was accepted by Chief of Ukhrul village as well. The colonial authorities were not ready to sacrifice their political goals or take the risk of introducing Christianity in the Hinduised communities in the valley, but instead made suggestions to Pettigrew to go to the hills. It also indicates that the colonial power had always construed hill tribes from a different perspective.

After getting the support from American Baptist Missionary Union in 1895, which had a mission station centre in Assam, Pettigrew moved to Ukhrul village in Tangkhul country in 1896 (Solo & Mahangthei, 2006). He made Ukhrul as his ‘mission centre’, where he will launch his mission works, and also used as a centre for coordinating all of the missionaries’ activities. The significance and functions of Christian ‘mission centre’ and colonial

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21 Legend has it that the Chief of Ukhrul was already informed by his predecessor that a Whiteman will bring light and change his community. So when the Chief of Ukhrul, Raihao saw Pettigrew the prognosis of his predecessors came to his mind, therefore he stopped his men from killing Pettigrew, and granted him the permission to work in his village.
administrators headquarter have a lot of things in common. The ordinary places or villages where ‘administrative offices’ were established, began to change from a big village into a town. It not only changed the size of population and led to the emergence of market, but it had massive impact on the socio-cultural life and political practice of the community. For the colonial authority a place where they set up an administrative office came to symbolize their political power, and the nerve centre of their authority. For the Christian missionaries, the mission centers were the heart of their activities, where major decisions and initiatives were taken. Pettigrew’s Mission centre was not only the centre for Tangkhuls, but as his mission works expand, it became a centre for the entire activities taken up in other communities and the entire state. And intriguingly, Ukhrul was the ‘mission centre’ for the missionaries as well as administrative headquarter for the colonial power. The relationships between the colonial power and missionaries had manifested in various forms and the sharing of common place for controlling their functions was one of such. The Christian missionaries have made major contribution and influence the tribal societies in Northeast in the spheres of: (1) the Gospel and new lifestyle, (2) humanitarian services, (3) literature, and (4) education (Downs, F S, 1976). However, most of the initiatives of the Missionaries were taken up in collaboration with the colonial power.

In the initial period, Pettigrew had to struggle with the language problem, and also take necessary initiatives to ensure that some students would come to his school. Due to the irrelevance of formal education in Tangkhul society at that point of time and ambiguity of Pettigrew’s intention in the mind of the people; in whatever measures he took, people were not cooperating. In one of the Mission reports, Pettigrew wrote that: “The Missionary’s arrival at Ukhrul caused no little excitement, what was to be expected, a great deal of suspicion” (Solo & Mahangthei 2006: 13). Pettigrew had faced these difficulties in the initial period, but when the hurdles were finally overcome; the school became the most significant project whose contribution to mission works went beyond missionary’s calculation. The subjects taught in the school, contents of the textbooks, and various other practices of Mission school have evoked debates from various quarters. The so-called ‘mission school’ has also been considered as the ‘media of evangelism’ because the ‘chief objective in giving education to the tribesmen was to propagate Christianity’ (Lolly 1985: 30). Gradually, most of the early converts of Pettigrew were his own students in the school,
and they also become competent mission workers. Pettigrew has contributed immensely to development of Tangkhul language from purely oral form to written structure. He had devoted much of his early years to master Tangkhul language, because without this knowledge it was difficult to communicate with the people, or carry out missionary works. Pettigrew has done innumerable translations in Tangkhul language. For the school, he had composed first and second primer in Tangkhul by 1897. Thus, the foundation of Tangkhul literature was laid down by the school primers which Pettigrew had written. Before this, Tangkhul language was totally in oral form and the system of writing in scripts and letters were unknown to the Tangkhuls. The language that was taught in the school includes Tangkhul, Manipuri, and English was taught to students who had aptitude for learning this language (Solo & Mahangthei 2006: 16). However, the medium of instruction was in Manipuri, which was the lingua-franca of various communities living in Manipur. The essence of teaching language lies in imparting the knowledge and skill of ‘writing’, and not actually the language themselves. The oral skill, such as ‘narration’ and ‘memory’, had already been prevalent. What was missing was the skill and knowledge of writing down in words; to put those vocal usages into letters. In the realms of literacy Pettigrew’s school has made massive contribution and benefitted all the communities in Manipur.

Even though the school in Ukhrul was fully funded by the state, Pettigrew had the liberty to teach Christian beliefs as restrictions on missionary works were not imposed in the hill areas of Manipur. The practices in school were more of religious exercises practiced in the West, rather than just a process of acquiring knowledge. Here, in Pettigrew’s school, formal learning was juxtaposed with Christian beliefs and practices, and western culture. The school in Ukhrul opened daily with a payer and singing and on Sundays the students had common singing sessions and listened to ‘Gospel story’ (Solo & Mahangthei 2006). From these common practices in the school, young Tangkhul students began to incorporate western cultural practices, like dressing patterns and new style of singing. Mostly they were taught to sing gospel songs in the form of short choruses, which were different from typical church hymnals, but more like a common western songs. But later on, hymnals became an integral part of the Christian worship service, and all the newly coverts began to learn this form of singing as a part of the Christianization process. Western dresses and new cultural practices became the ‘symbols’ of being part of the Christian community. From school,
these new practices began to spread to the wider realm of social milieus. But what really set the benchmark for most of changes which took place at that period was conversion to Christianity.

**Literary Works of the Missionaries**

The missionaries’ attempts to learn and publish books in tribal language were largely determined by its importance in religious practices. The education in school was accompanied side by side with translations of Biblical text in Tangkhul language. Most of the Christian practices were text based, e.g. reading Bible in the church or singing Hymnal, so it became a necessity for the Christian missionaries to publish religious books in tribal language. Consequently, this initiative by the missionaries established the base for the development in culture of reading and writing text in tribal societies. After the publication of Tangkhul Primers for teaching course in schools, Pettigrew had already desired to publish ‘Catechism’ so that it could be used in Sunday worship service (Solo & Mahangthei 2006: 16). Apart from the school textbooks and the grammar and dictionary books, most of the literary works of the Christian missionaries were for utilizations in religious practices. Pettigrew had translated the *Gospel of John*, *Luke*, and *Acts of Apostles* in Tangkhul from the *New Testament* in 1906 (ibid: 93). This was the first major translations in Tangkhul language taken up Pettigrew. Before this, most of the publications in Tangkhul were in the form of school texts for schools in Ukhrul. One of the major contributions of Pettigrew to the establishment of Tangkhul Literature was the introduction of Roman characters as scripts for writing in Tangkhul. When Pettigrew started his school in Ukhrul, he had the option of choosing Bengali script, which was used in the schools in valley, and the Roman script. Pettigrew chose the latter for the reason that the students would be able ‘to learn to read and write in their own tongue as well as English’ (Solo & Mahangthei, 2006: 22). For the students in Ukhrul School, Pettigrew had seen no significance in learning the Bengali script. Pettigrew, in one of his reports, wrote that: “Bengali would be of little use to them, so it has been discarded, although it might be worthwhile later on to teach them the character, for the purpose of reading Manipuri, a language they are familiar with” (ibid). Considering the wider significance of English and for its utilities in religious practices Pettigrew might have preferred Roman character over Bengali. Subsequently most of the early publications
in Tangkhul had been in Roman script, and so far no publications in Bengali script or any other script for Tangkhul language has appeared. Secondly, in Tangkhul society, each village spoke a different dialect which was comprehensible by neighboring villages, but unknown to far-off villages located in different regions. By choosing the dialect of Ukhrul village as the language for publications for all the Tangkhuls, Pettigrew had solved the vexed problem of linguistic diversities in Tangkhul society. The extensive usages of Tangkhul language, which Pettigrew had chosen, in schools and churches had established the base for the development of common language of all Tangkhuls, irrespective of village and regional variations in spoken dialect. Otherwise, it would have been another difficult task for the Tangkhuls themselves to choose a common language for their community.

Most of the early books of Pettigrew were for elementary schools, for the young learners of Tangkhul language. But, the Tangkhul Primers which Pettigrew wrote became the cornerstone for Tangkhul literature, as most of his students were the first writers amongst the Tangkhuls to write in their own language. Pettigrew added few characters for writings in Tangkhul which were not a part of the Standard English Alphabets that are taught in school. This contribution of Pettigrew paved the way for the writing of Tangkhul language in Roman characters. However, the most substantive work of Pettigrew for Tangkhul language has been the publication of *Tangkhul Naga Grammar and Dictionary* in 1918. This book was written in English, but it was one of the first work which discusses Tangkhul language in details: its grammatical rules and nuances, and various usages. For many years Pettigrew's Grammar book has served as reference book and guide for writers in Tangkhul language. Though Pettigrew had done most of the publication works, some have argued that his students had also made major contributions to his work as Pettigrew was not so much fluent in Tangkhul language. But the interest and task that Pettigrew had taken up for the development of Tangkhul language cannot be discounted. As mentioned, most of the missionaries' writings in Tangkhul were work of translations pertaining to Biblical text and religious purposes. Pettigrew began his translation works by publishing few portions of the New Testament, taking up one chapter after another. Finally Pettigrew completed the translation of entire New Testament text and published it in Tangkhul in 1927 (Solo & Mahangthei, 2006: 93). Initially there was no demand for the Biblical translations which Pettigrew had published. But with burgeoning of Christians converts among the Tangkhuls,
these books became the most important book that Tangkhuls have ever possessed. The education systems had equipped most of the Tangkhul converts with the skill to read and write in Tangkhul, thus the demands for these books increased significantly. With the publication of these books and the growth of literacy, the 'text' based religious practices were finally institutionalized in Tangkhul society. Subsequently, the development and changes in religious realm had massive impact on the growth of Tangkhul literature in the years to come.

**Introduction of New Musical Culture**

From the early period of mission work, the missionaries had already discovered the strong interest that Nagas had in artistic activities, such as music and singing. However, the interest of the missionaries was not on the folksongs and traditional music of the Nagas. Their attentions had been totally directed towards preparations of the converts to be able to take part in singing hymnals in the church. The introduction of new singing styles and musical instruments began from the 'mission school'. In Pettigrew's school in Ukhrul, the students began their daily courses with singing and prayer (Solo & Mahangthei 2006:16). Most of the songs and school text of the instruction were based on Christian beliefs. And on Sundays these extra-curricular activities were given ever greater importance by taking up worship service for students. Learning of new songs became a part of their education process, even though most of the songs were worship songs, which the students have to master like any other subjects taught in the school. These practices are still continued in private schools and those institutions managed by the church. Schools were established in almost all the village which had established a church, thus the proliferation of this new musical culture was done through educational systems as well as religious institutions.

As a part of preaching strategies, Pettigrew had extensively employed 'Gramaphone' as an integral part of teaching gospel stories to the people wherever he went. It served as an attraction to the curious listeners who had never seen such music playing machine. To draw attention of people and in order to introduce modern technologies, Pettigrew had apparently used record player as a strategy. Pettigrew wrote that the 'Gramaphone Service' was always
an attraction, and he “generally took the opportunity of translating them the meaning of such records as the “Glory Song” and “Tell Mother I’ll be there” (ibid). The gramophone had been a useful instrument for Pettigrew to introduce not only the Christian values and belief but also exposed new musical forms to the Tangkhul Naga. The records that were played does not actually fall into the category of Church Hymnal songs and music, but were part of popular Western gospel songs. The adaptation of new mode of singing was not easy for the general public, even though the school students would have found it comfortable. Pettigrew has also translated numerous Western Church Hymnals into Tangkhul. The first Hymnal book translated by Pettigrew in Tangkhul was Jesu wui Laa (Songs of Jesus). This Hymnal book was a compilation of all those songs which Pettigrew had taught to convert Tangkhuls and his students in the mission school. The lyrics of Hymns in Tangkhul were direct translations from Western Church Hymnals; whereas the songs were sung in the style of old Tangkhul folksongs, as most of the Christian congregation had not mastered the new mode of singing. Later on, Pettigrew employed Western musical notations for hymnals and they were published for using in the church. The choir groups were formed in every church, which specialized in singing hymnals and took the leading part in church rituals specially pertaining to group singing. Thus, gradually musical instruments like Guitar, Drums etc. were introduced to the Tangkhuls through religious practices, which later spilled to various other cultural practices as well. While introducing the new music, Pettigrew and the mission workers had deliberately attempted to discard the old folksongs. The early converts recount that they were prohibited by the missionaries to sing folksongs, as they apprehended that the continuation of past practices would lead to retraction to old religion. This policy of the missionaries, by negating the traditional practices of the converts, created massive differences between the traditional Tangkhul cultural practices and the new lifestyle which the Christian converts had adopted. The old modes of culture like singing folksong and dancing was made redundant through the process of conversion. Meanwhile, singing hymnals became a sacred performance which would enhance the spiritual life of the converts. Although, the process of un-learning traditional ways and adoption of new life, like hymnals and reading the Bible was considered as necessary by the converts themselves as well, one can see that coercion and imposition was present in all these acts. Once the decision to embark on a new religion was made, the new converts were virtually under the authority of the missionaries and church.
Disciplining the Converts

Pettigrew had imposed 'strict discipline' in the church in order to maintain 'the holiness of the church as a people of God' (Lolly 1985: 43). He was convinced that Christians should lead a 'distinct life' based on the Biblical teachings and different from 'Non-Christians' (ibid). Pettigrew's discipline includes abstinence from the participation in traditional festivals which involved taking part in old rituals, drinking rice beer, dancing and singing folk songs, and all other cultural practices associated with their past (ibid). When this 'strict discipline' was implemented in the church many backed out, and Pettigrew had just few followers, but still then he was adamant in following the disciplines. In the process of conversion, the church had been used as an institution and instrument to control the behavior of the converts. Those who did not follow the disciplines were 'excluded' from the church and they were also 'isolated' from community activities (Lolly, 1985: 45). These disciplines were not just a project of planting Christian life and 'cleansing' of 'evil practices', but it became a part of 'civilizing mission' which the missionaries and colonial power had always intended to implement. The missionaries were not only opposed to traditional religious practices, but it also includes all other cultural and social practices which in principle were not in conflict with Christian beliefs and practices. As the rhythm of everyday life of Nagas was interrupted by the Christian beliefs and practices, their concept of 'time' and space were also subsequently transformed. Sunday became a day solely reserved for sacred activities; which actually disrupted the pattern of time they had been observing from the past.

Christianity not only changed the religious beliefs and practices, but also convinced the Tangkhuls to adopt different lifestyles and cultural practices. The disdain for old cultural practices were implanted on the minds of the converted Tangkhuls by the Christian missionaries, as they considered that all forms of folk practices were inextricably connected with traditional religious beliefs and practices. On the other hand, there were massive drives by the missionaries to the converted Tangkhuls to adopt western cultural practices and discard old practices. And, in the new social set-up established by Christianity, the status of tribal cultural practices was relegated to oblivion. This new perspective implanted on the tribes like Tangkhuls not only destroyed the base of their cultural practices but also made them 'feel inferior' when they came into contact with other communities. The thought
process and psyche of the community was arrested and diverted to a different direction: from a stable self-esteem to the perception of being inferior to others. The desire to learn, acquire, and adopt ‘other’ cultural practices and lifestyle began to grow along with the increase of ‘inferiority’ complex; these features were non-existent before the advent of Christianity. What conversion meant to missionaries was not just acceptance of Christian baptism, but practically the call for ‘total cultural transformation’ (Eaton, 2000: 56). During the Christianization process, religious conversion and cultural transformation were intrinsically correlated as adoption of new cultural practices, like western dress or abstinence from alcohol consumption, were considered as ‘outward signs’ of inner transitions (ibid). Thus, expectations from Christian community from the converts to prove their conviction through actions, and the struggle of the newly converted to prove their transformation set the benchmark for various changes in Tangkhul society. There always had been rigorous effort to create ‘distances’ and ‘differentiation’ between believers of Christianity and old belief systems of the Tangkhuls. Subsequently, as Christianization process moved further, not only the old beliefs systems and rituals, but traditional cultural practices were also relegated to the past.

**Beginning of Modern Cultural Practices**

Modernity implicitly implies ‘change’, but this change does not refer only to the incorporation or adoption of ‘alien’ culture and practices. Changes and development could take place from ‘within’, and not necessarily always from the influences from ‘without’. Here, the differences between ‘endogenous’ and ‘exogenous’ factors of change became extremely important. However, what needs to be noted is that the experiences of ‘Modernity’ are not the same everywhere. What had happen during the modernization period in Europe and the West would have little similarities with the experiences of modernity in colonial country like India. And the experiences of modernity in the so called tribal society would be different from other communities; even with their closest neighbors. Roy-Burman has argued that the tribes in India have ‘different starting points in the process of modernization’, because of the overall differences of tribal societies with the ‘general population’ (Roy-Burman, 1970). In the tribal societies, which were located in the extreme corner of the country and the ‘frontier’ regions, the process of modernity was triggered by
the interventions of the colonial power and non-state agencies like the Christian missionaries. During the colonial era, there were massive inputs from the colonial state and missionaries with the determined effort to ‘change’ and transform tribal communities and their livelihood. From this period the exogenous forces of change assumed a significant role in their society, before this the ‘outside’ influence in their society was negligible. However, the endogenous process of change began to take place only after the end of colonial era and the maturation of Christianization process. The endogenous processes were more of an impact of the works of eternal agencies. Here, the difference between exogenous and endogenous forces of change lies in doing the things by oneself rather than relying on others to do the work, even though the nature of work may be the same.

In post-colonial era, with the establishment of a new nation-state, the intervention of state in tribal society became more intensive. Roy-Burman has identified Constitutional mechanism of the state as one of the exogenous forces of change in tribal society (ibid). The policy of modern nation-state has been determined by the ‘conscious stance’ to make the tribals fully participate ‘as equal in the emerging civic order of the nation’ (Sinha 1981). The national policy of India has been guided by the principle “to ‘integrate’ and ‘level up’ the underlying “undeveloped” tribal groups in the common national social order with the non-tribal groups as quickly” (ibid). The state’s perspectives and interventions towards the tribes have some continuity from the colonial period to post-colonial, particularly the need to ‘uplift’ tribal societies from their position to the higher level. The colonial state had adopted the policy of ‘isolation’ and ‘protectionism’ of the tribal societies from the mainstream. However, the modern state tried to ‘integrate’ the tribal societies with the mainstream society as a part of the ‘nation building’ process, while at the same time implementing some protective measures to safeguard the interest of the tribals. But, most of the modern nation-states interventions on the tribal societies have been late measures, the groundwork for most of the changes taking place in tribal societies had already done by the colonial state and Christian missionaries. The impact of modern nation-states is more on the political realm as the tribals began to take part in the political engagement at the same time
strong 'resistance movements' began to emerge in tribal societies for realizing their own political aspirations.

In cultural realm of tribal societies, the works of the missionaries have made far reaching impacts. Although, 'culture' was not the main aim of their 'mission'; it became a 'free gift', a 'by product' of their work (Sinha, 1993). In one way or the other the missionaries were commanded to implant the 'achievements of European culture' to the colonized people (ibid). They have succeeded massively in carrying out this task, transporting European culture to the tribal societies as Christianity was accepted with conviction. After Christianity was embraced by almost all the Tangkhuls, there was complete overhaul of all the traditional beliefs and practices in Tangkhul society. From the most banal practices like house-keeping to the major cultural practices such as celebrations of festivals, the changes were visible in every sphere of their social life. In the past, Tangkhul houses were decorated with wood carvings; the front-side of the Tangkhul house was usually represented with carvings of various symbols, depicting the domestic animals (like head of the buffalo, which represents wealth) and designs of the shawls. After Christianity was accepted, according to Horam the very first changes were in 'material equipment' like lamps, lantern, guns, umbrellas etc, which replaced the earthenware and wooden utensils (Horam, 1978). The Nagas, especially youths, began to take keen interest on adopting western dresses. By this time, modernity had arrived in Tangkhul society in various forms, its presence was felt in different spheres of their life. While the common folk were fascinated by the new material things, there were also significant developments in the artistic and cultural realms as well. The indices of modernity also emerge in the literary field and musical culture. The willingness to adopt new things and practices made the ground fertile for the growth in artistic activities as well. Meanwhile, in cultural practices of the Tangkhuls, we see that new forms of practices like written literature and recording music began to emerged.

22 The Nagas began to emphasize the demand for the establishment of their own nation from the time when Colonial era was about to come to an end. The Naga Club, which was formed in 1918, submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929 demanding that Nagas should be left outside the purview of Indian Union.

23 Different forms of symbols were made both outside and inside the house, it was mentioned by an old person in one of the interviews that such marks were made to make the house complete in its design and in every sense. The decoration of Tangkhul houses were not only an aesthetic expression, it also form a part of the microcosm of the world they inhabit.
Emergence of Tangkhul Literature

The establishment of schools in the far flung villages had made modern education accessible to most of the Tangkhuls. Even though there was pessimism about the significance of such type of learning in the early period of school establishment, the growth of Christianity and the new employment opportunities made education a promising prospect. Literacy not only became a skill but also a prestige in the society. It was the sign of the times, heralding the arrival of a new era. Communications, whether official or personal, in the forms of writing letters and applications became a common phenomenon. There was also an important shift in the mode of recording events and knowledge: moving away from maintaining 'record' through oral traditions, the written documents were given greater emphasis. Public documents and official records were all kept in written form; the legalistic importance of such 'text' had made this a necessity. The religious practices in the church had also made literacy a necessary skill to be acquired as Susan Vishwanathan has shown in great detail (Viswanathan, 2000, 2007). What contributed massively to the growth of literacy were the village schools, which were either sponsored by the church or the state government. By 1907, according to Pettigrew's report, there were 11 Elementary Day Schools and 294 students, out of which 12 were girls (Solo & Mahangthei 2006: 67). Education for girls was also not neglected by the missionaries, and there were girls students from the early years of school establishment in Ukhrul. Alice Pettigrew, the wife of William Pettigrew, had taken great interest in educating young Tangkhul girls. She had organized night schools so that girls will be able to acquire literacy. After a decade of his stay in Ukhrul, considering the fact that Pettigrew was working in unfavorable condition for the growth of modern education, he had made substantive progress in the field of education. However, education was one of the projects which the colonial state and the missionaries had worked closely.

The village schools were established with the intention to spread the literacy to all the members of the community. Though the state had borne the expenditure for the construction of building and teacher's salary, the course of school textbooks and teachers were managed

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24 In the society where orality was prevalent, the spoken word has great importance. Legal decision was decision and made in words.
by the missionaries. Those students who had the potentialities for higher learning were sent outside of the state, and usually they were admitted in Mission schools in Assam. Those who have passed out from the Middle English school in Ukhrul were again sent to village schools to take up teaching job. Pettigrew was against the policy of appointing non-Christians as teachers for Mission schools and schools in the Hill areas (ibid). That’s why he had preferred the students from his own school to teach in village school; this was deliberately done to insure that education and Christian teachings goes together at the same time. These were the procedures and strategies that missionaries had adopted in the initial phase of their literacy campaign. Through these schools the numbers of literate individuals began to grow in Tangkhul society. The developments in the field of literacy and education had direct impact on the growth of literature and ‘written culture’ among the Tangkhuls.

The early students of Pettigrew took the initiative in writing in Tangkhul language, and they happen to be first persons in their society to learn the skill of reading and writing. They took up the task of writing from where the missionaries had left behind. Apart from the Grammar book and school textbooks, Pettigrew had focused mainly on translation of Biblical text and Hymnals. He had begun writing from 1896, the year he established Mission Centre in Ukhrul. It marked the beginning of the journey of Tangkhul literature. The style of writing in Tangkhul language and the foundation for taking-up the work of writing had already been laid down by him. Those who had taken up writing in the early periods of Tangkhul literature were S. Kanrei, T. Luikham, and M. K. Shimray. Though some of them had published books in English, most of their literary works were written in Tangkhul. The first book written in Tangkhul by Tangkhuls themselves began in 1918, when M. K. Shimray wrote Yurka Kata (Poetry) as a textbook for school (Chiphang, 2006). Then the Tangkhuls students who were studying in M. E. School in Ukhrul had felt the need to develop Tangkhul literature. Thus, with this vision the Tangkhul Literature Society (TLS) was formed in 1938 by the early educated Tangkhul.25 The broad focus of TLS was: (1) development of Tangkhul language, (2) proper education of Tangkhul youngsters up-to University level, and (3) to insure that every tradition and activities of the Tangkhuls are written in their own language (ibid). The primary work of TLS has been the improvement of

Tangkhul language by taking up the task of correcting spellings and usages. After the approval of the Indian Government that tribal language can be taught in Government schools, TLS has taken up the task of preparing and publication of school textbooks in Tangkhul language. Thus, finally the works that the missionaries were doing in the past were taken up by the Tangkhuls themselves. TLS has emerged as indigenous agencies of change in their society which strive to usher modernity, while at the same time retain their own culture. At the early phase of modernity, various organizations and society were established to ascertain and promote indigenous culture and practices. And these organizations became indigenous forces of change, ushering a new phase in the development of society.

With the publication of T. Luikham’s *Wung-Tangkhul Okhot Mayonza* (Customary Laws, Tradition and Culture of Wung-Tangkhul) in 1961, print culture actually began to take shape. As the title suggests this book discusses the customary laws and traditional practices of the Tangkhuls in detail. It was the first book which presents historical and ethnographic accounts of the Tangkhuls from the insider’s viewpoint. From 1960s onwards books in Tangkhul written by individual writers in the form novellas, story, history and poetry etc began to appear (Chiphang 2006). From this period written literature became a part of the cultural activities of the Tangkhuls. The educated Tangkhuls took up writing as a responsibility towards their community, as well as an artistic activity. The emergence of readership also encouraged the writers to take up this task and Tangkhul literature began to emerge as a significant feature of the transitions taking place in society. The ability to read was something, but writing a book necessitates a great deal of knowledge, imagination, and creativity. Thus, the writer’s skill and artistic abilities began to appeal to the literate population of the society. Early Tangkhul literature had its root in the oral tradition; it was not marked by a complete break from the past. If we see the literary works of early Tangkhul writers, most of their work is concerned with the folktales and oral narrative of their past. The early writers in Tangkhul language like Y. K. Shimray had massively utilized folktales and folksongs in their publications. The works of fiction, in the form of novellas, in Tangkhul literature comes much later, when the people had become more acquainted with other literatures of other languages. But, what is significant here is that Tangkhul literature has its roots in the oral tradition, even though written literature was totally a new
phenomenon for the community. And, the new usages with their language and words began to grow as the entire community was beginning to adopt literacy.

New Music Culture: Church Hymnals, Radio and Cassettes

The publication of Church Hymnal books in Tangkhul by Pettigrew established the new singing tradition in Tangkhul society. In 1914, Pettigrew first published Tangkhul Hymnal book with musical notes in Tonic Solfa, with the help from the Religious Tract Society of London, England (Zeliang. 2005: 123). After this, he discontinued inclusion of musical notes from the publication of Hymn books. However, in the fourth edition of ‘Tangkhul Naga Hymn Book’, Pettigrew once again included musical notes because “the music and words appeal to this Christian community more than any other” (ibid). Music had always been a huge attraction for the Tangkhuls. Initially, the people had great difficulty in learning the typical Western Church Hymnals. It was only through rigorous practice in the church, that they were able to learn this new style of singing. The inclusion of musical notes urged the singers to master the musical notes as well, so that they would be able to sing in a more correct and professional manner. “Laa Khangahan” (Singing Competition) became a common practice in every church and in occasions where religious ‘Conferences’ among the churches were organized. Therefore, from being a learner of Western songs, Tangkhul Christians moved towards professionalism and competitors of this art. The practices in the church had also influenced the early Tangkhul country love songs. What had begun as part of religious practice became an integral part of the community’s cultural life. Singing had always been a popular and community affair in Tangkhul society. So the adoption of new musical styles in church was easily spread to all other practices in a short period of time. Rewben Mashangva, a folk music artist, remarked that church Hymnals not only influence the Tangkhul love songs, more than that some of the early love songs were sung in the similar tune of Hymnals. Thus, in the initial period, popular Tangkhul love songs had a lot of similarity in singing styles with Hymnals. Later on, as Tangkhuls became more professional in music; Hymnals and country songs emerge as two distinct forms of art and genre. The main difference between these two forms of music lies more on the usage, rather than the actual musical differences. Church hymnals were so pervasive of Tangkhuls social life that even in occasions which are purely recreational; Hymnals were sung as a part of the
The charms of electronic goods had been introduced to the Tangkhuls by the Christian missionaries. The missionaries had used gramophone as a part of their preaching equipment and used it as a strategy to get attention of the public. With the opening up of markets, the tribal societies were also able to purchase and at the same time enjoy modern electronic gadgets. Small electronic gadgets became a 'symbol' of being 'hip' and it became an object of envy for others. Initially the Tangkhuls used to call radio music as 'oko wui khon' (sound of box). The perfection and finesse of music being heard or broadcast from radio became a model for their style of singing. Those who were really good in singing were sometimes compared with music heard in the radio. Finally, the All India Radio (AIR) station in Imphal began to broadcast programs in Tangkhul language from 1960s onwards. In the emergence of modern Tangkhul music, Radio has played a crucial role in promoting and popularization. Tangkhul programs are broadcast for less than an hour every day after 5 p.m. in the evening. However, for some villagers, radio remains the main source of entertainment and information. At one point of time, radio was the only public broadcasting system that all the Tangkhuls in different villages were able to access and share. Thus, in some way it has been the cornerstone for the emergence of popular Tangkhul music. The radio station has also served as the most effective launch pad for Tangkhul musicians to promote and popularize their music. Some of the earliest Tangkhuls songs were recorded in the radio station for regular broadcasting. And, those recorded in radio stations were later on made into albums, but some songs were never produced as an album or sold in the market. Later on, with the availability of tape recorders, cassettes began to play a significant role for the popularization of music amongst the Tangkhuls.

The early Tangkhul songs were much like Western Country love songs, mostly sung in very slow and husky voices. Musical accompaniments were also minimal, hollow guitar and drums were only musical sounds employed in some of the songs. But, they were altogether different from the flavor of church hymnals, which were usually sung in groups. The theme of early songs were also concerned with relationships, youthful love affairs and life in the
village, again much like western country songs. Most of the Tangkhul musicians, like Rewben Mashangva, Source Mashangva, and Thangmeiso agrees that ‘Tangkhul Country Songs’ actually exist, and it is the root of modern Tangkhul music.

The early albums in Tangkhul were all recorded and sold in cassette format. The Tangkhul albums were distributed through sales in music shops in Ukhrul and Imphal. Even now, production of music in the form of cassette album is still prevalent. The significance of new technology, like cassettes and record players, is such that it not only transforms the production and popularizing of music, but created a new culture. It also made the Tangkhuls across the villages and towns to enjoy and share a particular song. The practices of producing cassettes become one of the foremost desires of every musician and amateur artist. One may term the production of music albums as a form of commercialization in the realms of cultural practices, which was absent in the past. However, most of the music artist expressed the dismay that they hardly make any profit out of producing albums. As the market for such cultural products are still low, profit motives does not make much sense here. Still then, they continue to produce albums as a form of contribution to the cultural practices of the Tangkhuls.

With the adoption of modern cultural practices, the Tangkhuls were able to learn new lifestyles and practices of different cultures. The changes in Tangkhul society, which was characterized by the abandoning of traditional practices, had taken place initially in the sphere of religion and cultural practices. However, these changes open the barriers for adoption of substantial transformation in Tangkhul society. The crux of these changes lies fundamentally in the alteration of outlook and perception of the people. At present, the Tangkhuls are more receptive to different ideas and lifestyle and they are ready to adopt new cultural practices that they encounter.