

**LANGUAGE, ETHNIC IDENTITY AND CONFLICT: A STUDY OF  
YIMKHIUNG AND TIKHIR TRIBES**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO NAGALAND UNIVERSITY IN FULFILMENT  
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**By**

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This is being submitted to the Nagaland University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology at the Department of Sociology, Nagaland University.

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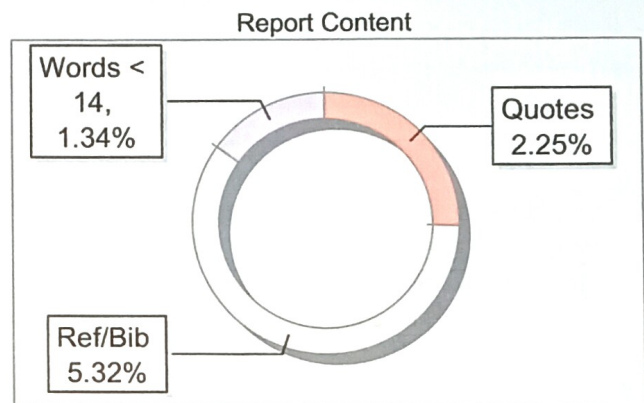
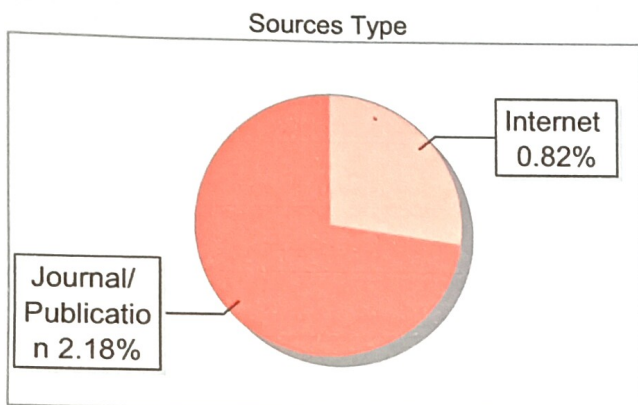
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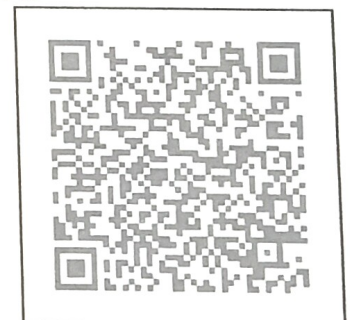


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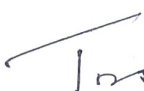
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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>NNC</b>	Naga National Council
<b>NSCN-IM</b>	National Socialist council of Nagaland -Isak muivah
<b>NSCN-K</b>	National Socialist council of Nagaland -Khaplang
<b>YTC</b>	Yimkhiung tribal council
<b>TTC</b>	Tikhir Tribal Council
<b>TBPA</b>	Tikhir Baptist Piti Atukhianti
<b>YBBA</b>	Yimkhiung Baptist Borü Amükhungdo
<b>TTM</b>	Tikhir Public Movement
<b>TTM</b>	Tikhir Tribal Movement
<b>TSU</b>	Tikhir Student Union

## GLOSSARY

<i>Arimbe</i>	Satan/devil
<i>Athrungru khim</i>	Warrior's shawls
<i>Aryimpuh</i>	Evil spirit
<i>Aryimbe</i>	Female spirit
<i>Beru-Tun</i>	Mother's price
<i>Jiphuyak</i>	kidney beans.
<i>Khiungpu</i>	Yimkhiung dialect is called a representative who is in charge of looking after the murung.
<i>Khyinulak</i>	In the Yimkhiung dialect, Khyinulak is the name of a prestigious necklace worn by women.
<i>Khyeanthurak</i>	Soul bird
<i>Khyeangm</i>	A dormitory house
<i>Kiulongthsur</i>	Governing body.
<i>Kiulung-zhyyibuh,</i>	Means a representative who is in charge of announcing updates in the village
<i>Kaza</i>	Yimkhiung dialect, which means tiger.
<i>Kiusikiu</i>	Means a new village in the Tikhir dialect,
<i>Langdam</i>	A loincloth worn by menfolk as half pants.
<i>Limberu,</i>	In Yimkhiung dialect, means representative in the village.
<i>Limpuru</i>	Person who acts as a peace mediator between villages
<i>Limthsunuk</i>	Is the name of a machete in Yimkhiung dialect, which was considered a special one it is decorated with human hairs.
<i>The Mahtsahru</i>	Representative in the village, whose role in the reconciliation process is as a mediator
<i>Mukdaklaak</i>	Young men and women exchange gifts as a sign of betrothal.

<i>Mulu</i>	In the Tikhir dialect is called Jhum cultivation.
<i>Nyahyiu</i>	Tikhir traditional women's attire, which is one of the oldest weaving.
<i>Rongkhim</i>	Yimkhiung dialect is a warrior shawl worn by men.
<i>Ryijabah</i>	Yimkhiung dialect is the name given to animistic deities.
<i>Rungthsun</i>	Means strip cloth, or in Nagames called Mekhela.
<i>Sadaam</i>	Traditional balcony
<i>Shihrolak</i>	Prestigious necklace worn by Yimkhiung women.
<i>Sangjangkiu</i>	Yimkhiung dialect means the village of thick groves of trees.
<i>Thurrumuh</i>	local quacks
<i>Tsungrumkhim</i>	Is the name of a shawl which is commonly worn by Yimkhiung of any age.
<i>Tukhia</i>	Tikhir dialect it is means dew people.
<i>Thulo</i>	In the Tikhir dialect is called paddy.

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# Chapter I

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a significant component in maintaining ethnic identity, as it encompasses complex communicative symbols that are inextricably linked to social activity and indispensable for all social existence. As the vehicle for the communication of thought and feeling, it provides the most influential single bond for uniting people and the most crucial mark of group identification. Language has an impact that extends beyond communication; it connects, and language fluency plays a crucial role in shaping ethnic identity and a sense of belonging. Linguistic identity is the common bond people share when they can comprehend each other in their mother tongues, even if they have no other common heritage' (Vishnu, 2021, p. 10). 'Language (or linguistic) identity refers to the speech community with which a person identifies. The most common subjects of individual choice are culture and language, as they enable people to identify with or belong to a particular culture and speak a specific language (Wu, 2022, p. 16). 'Language is, however, more than just a tool of communication; it has also been the source of conflict between various groups. It creates social cleavages similar to those created by religion and caste' (Kumar, 1996, p. 21). Language has become an essential determinant of identity politics in multi-ethnic and multilingual societies today (Gupta, 2016, p. 1).

### **The relation between Language and Identity:**

Language and identity are closely related and cannot be separated. Language is a complex communicative symbol inextricably related to social action and an indispensable instrument for all social existence. As the vehicle for the communication of thought and feeling, it provides the most influential single bond for uniting people. It is the most essential mark of group identification. Language and identity have a strong and inextricable relationship; both affect each other in some way, and every person is influenced by this connection. 'Our Language and surroundings determine who we are, considering the significance of language among us as it is strongly connected to others and affects society. A culture, which plays a

very significant role in constructing identity, affects language use (Alshehri, 2023, pp. 156-158). Language is so intimately connected to group identity, as it is a powerful, though instrumental, tool of ethnic minority political operatives. Identity is formulated and preserved through Language and changes with language change. Language determines the identity of a group, and in light of people's views. Therefore, an individual or a group must maintain their language choice to preserve their social identity (Taskeen & Shehzadi, 2014, pp. 1-12).

Ethnic and linguistic identities rarely exist separately; they are often another facet of how an individual identifies. In multiethnic societies, an ethnic minority, who do not speak the dominant language, eventually feels alienated and becomes conscious of their ethnic identity. On the one hand, the core communities in such societies use their language as a hegemonic instrument to subjugate the peripheral communities. This further leads to counter-mobilisation by the latter for the protection of their distinct linguistic identity. This phenomenon has manifested itself in the demand for new territorial units by endangered communities in Northeast India to assert their linguistic rights (Gupta, 2016, p. 1).

### **Concept of Ethnicity:**

The term “ethnic” is derived from greek word “ethnikos,” refers to nation, i.e., one who was neither Christian, Muslim, Jew, or Hindu, or for that matter, of any other religion, but falls under the category of the “others,” i.e., to say, animists or tribes (Saikia, 2018, p. 260). The noun form "ethnicity" did not appear in the Oxford English Dictionary until 1972, whereas its usage was attributed to sociologist David Reisman as early as 1953. Interestingly, classical anthropology tended to focus on ostensibly closed, isolated, tribal, peasant, and aboriginal or indigenous societies. The concept of ethnicity refers to the identification and categorisation of a group of individuals. The criteria may be linguistic, racial, or cultural. Ethnicity is a term used to identify oneself within a multicultural society. It differentiates itself from other groups in terms of race, kinship, language, the customary mode of livelihood, culture, and religion. The literature on ethnicity defines ethnic groups as people who believe that they share a distinctive common history, a common destiny, and culturally specific practices. Physical appearance, language, and shared territory may also contribute to ethnic identity in

varying degrees. Ethnicity can be referred to as a shared tradition, a system of shared values and culture by a group of people within a cultural unit who identify as a distinct entity, different from other cultures (Saikia, 2028, pp. 260-261).

To understand ethnicity, it is essential to know about the concept of an ethnic group. An ethnic group is a self-perceived group of people who share a common set of culture and traditions that are distinct from those of other groups with whom they are in contact. It denotes a particular group expressed in terms of a sense of continuity in belonging. An ethnic group is a social group that has shared a common cultural tradition within a larger society. An ethnic group can maintain a distinctive identity that differentiates its members from others in the larger society, for example, through dress, customs, language, and other cultural practices. Thus, it appears that in recent times, the term "ethnic group" or "ethnicity" has taken on a broader implication, not limited to so-called tribal or indigenous communities (Sengupta, 2014, pp. 22-23).

Ethnicity came to refer to groups that lived in mutual contact, rather than in isolation, but were distinct from one another. An ethnic group then becomes a relative concept, dependent on the perception of difference and stigmatised by the notion of the other. Ethnicity is often relative to a particular territory, usually a country or region. Ethnicity is often a factor in discrimination when accessing resources and opportunities. An ethnic group as a minority group faces racial, linguistic, and religious discrimination. When that state ignores the legitimate political, social and economic grievances of the disadvantaged groups, leading to ethnic conflict. Ethnic conflicts are a form of group conflict in which one group involved interprets the conflict and the ethnic divide.

Ethnicity refers to a group that shares a common origin, culture, or ancestry. (Barth,1969) Ethnicity is the product of particular kinds of inter-group relations and cannot exist in isolation; its formation and continuation are dependent on interaction with other groups (Hummell, 2014, p. 51). It welds together Individuals united by a common, inherited culture and traditional origin, who share a common dialect and religious faith, and are associated with a particular territory. Perhaps most importantly, they feel that they share the same

ancestry. Constant (2014) notes that people have identified and exhibited a sense of solidarity among members of the particular group through acculturation and integration. 'Ethnic Identity, on the other hand, is an affective construct where individuals view themselves. Others view them as belonging to a particular group. The growth of the spirit of ethnic identity assertion among various groups leads to their desire for a distinct identity (Garg, 2014).

Ethnicity refers to a group of people who have a common ancestry, language, culture, and traditions, typically associated with a particular territory, usually a country or region. Thus, it appears that in recent times, the term 'ethnic group' or 'ethnicity' has a broader implication that is not restricted to so-called tribal or indigenous communities (Mondal, 2014). The literature on ethnicity defines ethnic groups as people who perceive themselves as others perceive them, based on racial similarity, language, shared belief in a common history, and a shared territory, which may further contribute to ethnic Identity. It denotes a group expressed in terms of a sense of continuity in belonging' (Khobragade, 2010).

Ethnicity binds together individuals who share a common history, culture, and community, who have an amalgam of language, religion, and regional affiliation, and, perhaps most importantly, they feel that they come from the same ancestors. Sengupta (2014) describes 'Ethnic identity as enabling individuals to view themselves and others as belonging to a particular group. The development of the spirit of ethnicity or ethnic self-assertion among various groups results in an aspiration for a distinct identity for themselves. Ethnic groups with small populations and limited exposure to development tend to suffer from an identity crisis. The aspiration for an independent ethnic identity led to the formation of a nation within a nation through various means, including ethnic struggles and violence (pp. 111-113).

Ethnicity in the twenty-first century is a complex configuration of factors, including language, culture, historical bonds, and religion, and their distinctive features play a vital role in realising the value of existence (Debberma, 2014). The emergence of ethnicity can be seen as a part of the modernisation/globalisation process. In multi ethnic and multicultural countries, ethnicity is entirely an issue of forced assimilation, exclusion and ghettoisation. In

this perspective, ethnicity, to some extent, is a conscious individual self-decision. Hence, it is an aspect of community or group identity, and it is the situation and circumstances that make ethnicization appealing. It is quite easier to view ethnicity as requiring a broad vision of interrelationships about resource utilisation and position in the power structure. Several global forces are now converging to generate the current wave of ethnic politics. Ethnicity and ethnic politics may be referred to as the politics of presence.

### **The Concept of Ethnic Conflict:**

Wolf (2006) explained that ethnic conflicts are conflicts in which one party's ambition is defined in absolute ethnic terms, with the primary fault line of confrontation rooted in ethnic peculiarities (as cited in Donkor, 2023, p.7). Today, ethnicity is signified and valued as a tool in the struggle to preserve one's political power, territory and other resources (Saikia, 2018). Ethnicity is often expressed as discrimination in accessing resources and opportunities. The ethnic group as a minority group faces racial, linguistic, and religious discrimination. When they ignore the political legitimacy and economic and social grievances of the disadvantaged ethnic groups, it leads to ethnic conflict. Ethnic conflicts are those in which one group interprets the conflict and the ethnic divide.

### **Tension Conflicts in the World:**

Ethnic issues are prominent problems for several multi-ethnic countries worldwide. The issue is related to the Uyghur ethnic minority, whose historical homeland has long been Xinjiang. But Uyghurs in Xinjiang have political issues and tensions increased when the Chinese government initiated the migration of Han ethnic to Xinjiang for the extension of Han ethnic cultural identity and development. The Han ethnic group, which is the majority, is rooted in Confucianism and is regarded as the national Chinese identity of the state. Chinese authorities in favour of the Han ethnicity try to control the border areas of Mongolia, Tibet and the Xinjiang region, where non-Han ethnic groups dominate. The Chinese authorities disapprove and restrict the language, culture and religious beliefs of the Uyghur ethnic, which creates growing tension between the ethnics of Uyghur and Han and Uyghur ethnic minorities are forced to assimilate into Chinese identity (Melpayanty, 2021, pp. 106-111).

Ethnic conflicts, which are fought between families and ethnic elites in Kusasi and Mamprusi, are conflicts within the Bawka traditional areas of Ghana. Both ethnic groups have distinct origins, speak different languages and belong to different religions. Tension between the Kusassis and Mamprusis is centred on chieftaincy (local leadership) and land ownership, as well as resources. Violence between the two ethnic groups has many factors. After Ghana's independence, Kusasi groups attempted to reverse the power structure established during the British colonial era, when the Mamprusi were appointed as chiefs. Kusasi were unhappy about being kept under the suzerainty of Mamprusi but had to accede. Later, ancestral claims to the chieftaincy created tension and intermittent violence among them. This has harmed both the Kusasi and Mamprusi economies, due to repeated conflicts that have resulted in worsening poverty levels, the closure of trading activities, and substantial financial losses (Tseer et al., 2022, pp. 1-17).

#### **Ethnic Conflicts in India:**

The problem of ethnic conflict in Indian society is a serious one. 'Internally divisive forces of ethnic separatism are threatening the nation's internal cohesion and territorial integrity. In Punjab, the problem is Sikh dominance. Ethnic conflict in Punjab in the early 1980s was a violent rivalry against Sikhs in Delhi in which approximately 3,000 people died, and the reason was due to the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi (Singh, 1993, pp. 85-88). 'Hindu-Muslim communal conflict is a chronic problem that evolved due to the complex configuration of political, cultural, and religious issues. Although each problem situation is historically distinct and unique, they all belong to the generic class of ethno-social in plural societies (Rastogi, 1986, pp. 219-221).

#### **Ethnic conflicts in Northeast India:**

'Northeast India remained a distinct geographical, socio-economic, cultural, and political civilisation. It comprises eight states – Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh - inhabited by linguistically and culturally diverse people (Borgohain & Sinha, 2014, p. 12). The region has the most extraordinary ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity, with over 160 scheduled tribes and a diversified non-tribal population. It has at least 475 ethnic groups, and nearly 400 languages and dialects are

spoken. Of 635 tribal groups listed by the Anthropological Survey of India, 213 lived in Northeast India. The main ethnic groups in the region are the Nagas of Nagaland, Mizos, Hmars of Mizoram, Meiteis, Kukis of Manipur, Bodos, Karbi, Dimasa, Rabha, Kachari of Assam, Tripuri and Reang of Tripura; Khasi, Garo and Jaintia of Meghalaya; Adi, Apatani and Monpa of Arunachal Pradesh.

Some of the major ethnic conflicts in the region include those between the Garos of Meghalaya and the Rabhas of Assam, the violent clashes between the Kuki and Naga tribes in Manipur, and the ethnic conflict between the Hmars and Dimasa tribes in South Assam, and the ethnic tensions between the Meitei and Naga and Kuki tribes in Manipur. (Dutta & Bhuyan, 200, pp. 626-633). Northeast India has been a breeding ground for multiple conflicts, ranging from armed conflicts to ethnic conflicts. The hundreds of ethnic groups in the Northeast do not live in distinct areas. Therefore, their demand for an ethnic homeland often leads to generalised violence and mass displacement of people (Borgohain & Samrat, 2014, pp. 12-36). The various tribal and ethnic groups are individually fighting for their narrow interests, rather than for the welfare of the entire region (Khobragade, 2019, p. 1167). Northeast India exhibits distinctive socio-cultural features in terms of ethnicity, language, and cultural practices. As a result, there has been an ethnic assertion in every group, reflecting its socio-cultural and political aspirations. Language is one of the predominant factors contributing to the complexity of various social groups in the region (Gupta, 2016, p. 5). It appears, therefore, that linguistic diversity in the community has triggered and intensified ethnic tensions in the region (Sahu, 1998, p. 85). Today, northeast India has become one of India's most complex conflict zones.

Language issues in Northeast India are common in many regions due to ethnic diversity and Socio-political dynamics. All tribes are taking tremendous steps to improve their local languages, such as Kuki, Manipuri, Meitei, and Rongmei Naga. Language diversity leads to fragmentation, as every ethnic group seeks to use its language as a means of identity, which not only becomes an issue but also creates a barrier to intergroup relations within the states. While Languages serve as an important symbol of identity, and also pose challenges to social cohesion. The cultural communication between different tribes had a destructive impact

because the minority lost their language and culture as a result of the dominating tribe's language and cultural identity in the region (Gogoi, 2014, p. 135).

### **Conflict between the ethnic groups in Nagaland:**

Nagaland is one of the most ethnically diverse and rich states in Northeast India. It is a home to a variety of tribes, each having its own socio-cultural history. In Nagaland, the official language is English, and the common lingua franca is Nagamese, a blend of Hindi and Assamese that is spoken and understood. There is wider linguistic diversity in the Naga-inhabited area than anywhere in the country. The Nagas speak more than three dozen languages and dialects. However, despite such demographic, linguistic, and cultural diversity, the state is not immune to ethnically induced tensions. Nagaland exhibits distinctive socio-cultural features in terms of ethnicity, language, and social practices. As a result, there has been an ethnic assertion in every group, reflecting its socio-cultural and political goals. The ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga tribes in Nagaland has been linked to problems of autonomy, language, and identity rights.

### **Theoretical Frameworks:**

#### **Primordialism Theory:**

Primordialism regards ethnicity formed organically through time ethnic identities are derived from nature or passed down to the current generations of people from their ancestors (Kataria, 2018, p. 130) The Primordialist theory thinkers explain ethnic groups, saying that once people dispersed geographically and established different tribes, these groups developed different languages that reflected their unique identities and situations in life. Thus, as the ethnic group's Language was passed down from generation to generation, the group's ethnic spirit was also passed down to the next generations. According to Primordialist theory, the causes of ethnic conflicts are a natural phenomenon that arises from cultural disparities. Moreover, Primordialists also claim that ethnic conflicts are a result of "memories of past atrocities", which make violence "hard to avoid" (Yeghiazaryan, 2018, pp. 47-48).

Primordialism views the nations or ethnic identities as fixed, natural, and ancient. The relations between family members cannot be interpreted as any interpersonal relations; they possess a quality that can only be defined as "primordial" and derives from the bond of blood. Primordial is a view on the organic formed through a time of Language, history, culture and ethnic group, which can never change and remains until the group ceases to exist.

According to Primordialism theory, ethnic identities are derived from nature; individuals in the distant past constructed them and have been passing them down from one generation to the next from their ancestors. Every individual belongs to one ethnic group, which, once acquired, remains fixed over time. Moreover, members of an ethnic group have a group consciousness that develops from their Language, culture, traditions and history, and this group consciousness is reinforced over time through myths and symbols passed down from one generation to the next from their forefathers. As a result, their ethnic identity has survived for centuries. These emotions are understood as reflections of 'primordial attachments' such as blood ties and historical memories rather than reactions of immediate necessities. Put differently, according to primordial theory, although ethnic reactions emanate from the hatred of an ethnic group, the reasons for these outrages are the accumulation of biological, historical, immutable, and fixed elements (Celik, p. 2). When the group's ethnic identity is at stake, reactions of ethnic emotions evolve into conflicts. It is understood as a reflection of 'primordial attachments' such as blood ties and historical memories rather than reactions of immediate necessities. Put differently, according to primordial theory, although ethnic reactions emanate from the hatred of an ethnic group, the reasons for these outrages are the accumulation of biological, historical, unchangeable and fixed elements.

### **Constructivism Theory:**

The constructivist theory of ethnic identity posits that it is constructed and changes through various means, such as conquest, colonisation, or immigration. Ethnic groups are social constructions with identifiable origins and histories of expansion, amalgamation and division. They are fluid and originate within social, economic and political processes. Constructivists take identity as a social belief distinguished by rules of membership,

characteristics, and the behaviour expected in certain circumstances, and is a social influence; it is not natural and inevitable because it is not genes but the internal logic of social belief that drives identity construction and condition an individual's identities with particular groups. They draw attention to the historical construction and maintenance of exclusive identities by colonial and postcolonial ruling elites for political and social control. For constructivists, Language, history, symbols, and culture are significant in instigating ethnic rivalry. Constructivist theories suggest that ethnic conflicts can arise when an ethnic group's expectations are not met or when they perceive their ethnicity as being at a disadvantage relative to another ethnic group (Yeghiazaryan, 2018, p. 49).

**Instrumentalism Theory:** ‘Instrumentalism is a socially constructed term that can be manipulated by individuals or groups to achieve a specific political and social goal. Ethnic identities are flexible and used as a tool to achieve certain advantages, such as political power and economic benefits (Kataria, 2018, p.133). According to instrumentalism theory, ethnicity is neither inherent nor historical in justice that causes ethnic conflicts, but rather manipulated by elites or groups' ethnic identity and used as a tool to achieve specific goals, mobilise and gain political power. Ethnic conflict is therefore the result of political dominance and goal interest. He gives an example of the Rwanda case, how elites mobilise the groups for political ends, causing violence between ethnic groups. This theory posits that some groups participate not by personal choice, but as a result of their group affiliation, and choose to cooperate depending on the benefits; thus, ethnic conflicts can be unavoidable (William, 2015, p. 148).

### **Literature Review:**

In this section, a brief review of the literature is provided, summarizing major findings and significant contributions by researchers. The aim is to explain the foundation for current research further and showcase established knowledge.

### **Studies on Language and Ethnic Identity:**

Kaliyan Kumar Chakraborty (1996) mentioned the role and formation of Language in maintaining ethnic identity in his book. This book explains the tribes of Northeast India,

which represent a highly complex, multilingual setting where language barriers serve as solid bases for ethnic and tribal specificities and identities.

Susmita Sen Gupta (2016) examined how language plays a crucial role in shaping and asserting the identity of tribal communities in Northeast India. Her study highlights how language becomes a marker of distinctiveness among the various tribal groups and fostering a sense of solidarity within the community. Furthermore, it further explains the linguistic assertions made by the Bodos, Nagas, and Mizo for recognition and political power. She argues that language is used for political and social mobilisation, and it is employed to demand rights and promote cultural heritage.

B.B. Kumar (2005) focused on the origin and migration of the Naga tribes into their present settled area and conducted a linguistic survey of the Nagas. Kumar's research provides an analysis of the historical formation of the Naga identity.

Einar Haugen (2009) discussed the critical role that language plays in the formation of national identity and cultural unity, highlighting how dialect, along with language, represents a simple dichotomy in every situation, yet is infinitely complex. Haugen highlights the complexity of dialect and language identity, as well as how language interaction and their distinctness can influence social, political, and cultural aspects within a nation.

### **Studies on Ethnicity and Identity:**

Sinisa Malesavic (2004) critically reviews their contribution, arguing that, contrary to what is commonly believed, there is indeed a classical sociological theory of ethnicity. The author argued that ethnicity is still couched in antagonistic, economic terms, where it remains a secondary reality, a tool of exchange and coercion. He engages in and contributes to a broader sociological understanding, suggesting that ethnicity is treated as a tool for economic and social exchange.

In a study of S.L. Sharma (1996), he analyses the relationship between ethnicity and power. Sharma further explains that the primary attributes are its own cultural identity and ethnic

consciousness. He emphasises that ethnic consciousness reinforces the group by influencing it.

Bimal J Deb (2006) describes the complex relationship between ethnic identities and conflict in the region. He examines how various ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identities in northeast India were unified forces for the submergence of and the emergence under a pan-Indian national identity. Furthermore, ethnic issues in Nagaland and Northeast India highlight the ethnic crisis and tribal conflicts, and efforts to resolve the conflicts in the Naga Society as well as initiate peacebuilding and long-term sustainable solutions. Deb's work emphasises ethnic identity and conflict in the northeast region and challenges in achieving peace and integration within society.

N. Jayaram (2012) has highlighted and discussed identity, its relationship to ethnicity and community, and even the conflict on the other side. This article clearly explains the relationship between identity, community and ethnicity. It has explained how religion plays a role in identity, the gender dimension, Diversity, multiculturalism, and secularism.

Joseph Kweku Assan (2021) highlights the intersection of ethnicity and race in social solidarity struggles and support systems and how this ethnic identity plays an important role in determining social behavior and the production of social capital, especially amongst migrants and their natal communities.

Reuter, Tina K. (2023). 'Ethnic Conflict' defines and explains ethnic identity and the primordial approach of ethnicity as a fixed features of persons and communities. Ethnic identity is viewed as distinct in its intensity and durability, and as an existential factor that defines individual self-identification and communal distinctiveness.

Magda B, James N, Nissa, and Joseph H (2023) explain the meaning of ethnic identity and its importance. It explores articulations of an attachment to ethnic and religious identities. They conducted research using a survey to examine everyday practices related to ethnic

identification. The Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS) data, as this belief enabled people to express their own ethnic identity in their own words and to indicate the significance of these ethnic, religious, national, and sub-national identities to them. Even a study about theoretical conceptualisations of ethnicity and ethnic identities.

### **Studies on Identity and Culture:**

Yutsu. N. Tikhir (2005) outlines in brief the Tikhir Naga tribe's religious conversion and the partial forces that have influenced their ethnic culture through Christianity and modernisation. It included information about the victims' hardships and the conflict in the community.

Avitoli G. Zhimo (2011), in her article, 'Culture, Identity, and Change: The Case of the Sumi of Nagaland ', studied the relationship between the factors or forces that influence change, in some cases, like previous beliefs or practices that continue in the change. Avitotli provides points on changes accepted and adapted by the Naga Sumi. It said that in the history of the Sumi Naga tribe of Nagaland, continuity has been disrupted, cultural identity has been assaulted, and social order has been transformed due to the forces of Christianity, modernisation, and globalisation.

In another book, 'Historicity Cultural Diversity and Identities of Northeast India', the authors, Temjensosang and Athungo Ovung (2015), explain the overbearing character and complexion of ethnic identities articulated by various Northeast regions. Their study also provides an analysis of identities in terms of cultural diversity within the historical context of colonial and post-colonial epochs.

Dr. Mohan Debbarma (2014) explains the nature of identity assertion formation in his book and discusses about identity of the Borok community of Tripura. Dr. Debbarma aims to clarify misconceptions about the Borok community's identity and examines the ethnic and cultural factors that define their distinct communal identity through his study. This book highlights the importance of identity, culture, and the intersection of ethnicity in the modern world.

N. Joykumar Singh's (2006) study reveals the diversity among the indigenous Meiteis, the Nagas, and the Kuki in terms of religion and Language. This study discusses their ramification in identity formation, ethnic conflict, and territorial assertions.

Debojyoti Das (2014), in his article titled “The Yimchunger Nagas: Local Histories and Changing Identity in Nagaland, Northeast India”, illustrates the Yimchung tribe and narrates the oral history of the tribe. Further, he explains the entity conflict between two language groups, Yimkhiung and Tikhir, within the society.

### **Studies on Ethnic Conflicts:**

Ruma Bhattacharya (2011), in her study titled 'Identity Issues in Northeast India,' discussed identity crisis and ethnicity with particular reference to Tripura. This study focuses on the Bru (or Reang) tribe, which fled Mizoram two decades ago due to ethnic conflict and settled in the state of Tripura. The study highlights the ethnic tension between Mizos and Brus and the pathetic refugee conditions of the Brus (Reang).

Anuradha Dutta and Ratna Bhuyan (2007) studied and explained the ethnic crisis and violence of Assam, Karbi Anglong and Manipur. The issues covered in this study are extremist groups fighting on behalf of their community and feeling of becoming minorities in their land, and the minorities perceiving the threat from the majority. Such a situation reveals the underlying unrest and erosion of a peaceful environment, fostering a sense of distrust and hostility. In conclusion, Dutta and Bhuyans explain that the ethnic identities of Assam, Karbi Anglong, and Manipur reveal an identity crisis, marginalisation, and power struggles that have led to the disappearance of peace in the region.

Lal Dena (2008) provides a detailed explanation of the concerns and problems faced by the Hmars due to the difference in the period of their migration to their present habitat. In this book, the author deals with the identity crisis of Hmars, who were one of the worst victims of the artificial colonial boundaries that free India had inherited and were reduced to an ethnic minority with no political leverage to work out their future destiny.

Dr Mechiehol Savi (2012) explains the Naga national political movement and violence in Naga society, and briefly discusses the formation of the NNC and NSCN in Nagaland. Naga men were fighting for their Indian freedom, but brought division in their state, Nagaland.

Moges Zewiddu Teshome (2021) aims to demonstrate that ethnic identity and the causes of conflict in Ethiopia, with a particular focus on the two major ethnic groups, the Amhara and Oromo. Although two tribes share many similarities, they often experience conflict in their relationships. This paper explains the reason for division, the practice of conversion to Christianity involved taking a new, Christian name, usually a biblical Ge'ez or Amharic name. While another ethnic group, the Oromos, believe their ancestors traveled from Madagascar to Ethiopia in the southwestern part of the country before moving to the northern and eastern parts of the country during the mid-16th century. The problem lies between these two groups is a hatred towards the language, which has brought the Oromo nationalists in conflict with the Amhara elites due to its symbolic implication. Later, the Oromia tribe, who are extremists, converted themselves to the Protestant religion and waged indiscriminate attacks against Orthodox Christians in the Oromia Region on October 23, 2019, where Ahmara people were slaughtered in broad daylight and murdered in Ethiopia. This turn resulted in exploitation and ethnic conflict between the Amhara and the Oromo ethnic groups.

### **Studies on Theories of Identity and Ethnic Conflicts**

John T. Ishiyama (2011) includes Tina Kempin's contribution on 'ethnic conflict', explaining the terms 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity'. It highlighted two key schools of thought: the primordial approach, which posits that ethnicity is a permanent characteristic of individuals and communities; and the instrumental approach, which posits that ethnicity is a dynamic characteristic of individuals and communities. According to Primordialists, ethnicity is both an inherited biological attribute and a long history of practising cultural differences. However, the primordial focus on fixed identities fails to recognise variations in ethnic group formation, ranging from relatively short-term associations to long-standing, vigorous, and cohesive groups with biological and historical roots. Another is the instrumentalist approach,

which views ethnic identity as a flexible tool used by individuals and groups in various contexts. Instrumentalist was developed, which understands that ethnicity is employed to unify, organise, and mobilise populations to achieve larger goals or gain power. Both perspectives examine how ethnicity influences society and politics.

Laura Yeghiazaryan (2018) examines ethnic groups and explains theories under three main theoretical approaches —primordialism, constructivism, and instrumentalism — on ethnic violence in the Soviet states. According to the first theory, Primordialism, ethnic conflict is a natural phenomenon rooted in ancient hatred of cultural differences. Ethnic clashes in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova are historical animosities. According to the second theory, constructivism, ethnicities are not inherently conflictual, and identities are fluid rather than fixed and subject to change over time. In this case, ethnic violence also occurs due to shifting politics and the emergence of new national identities. The third theory, instrumentalism, suggests that ethnic conflicts are caused by political elites and ethnic entrepreneurs who mobilise the members of their ethnic group to achieve their own goals and economic advantage. It clearly explains the conflicting interests and goals with the instrumentalism theory of conflict between ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijanis, seen as politically motivated, used to take advantage of the situation to consolidate power.

The reviews support the same theory presented in Melpayanty Sinaga's (2021) work, highlighting the constructivist theory to understand the ethnic Tensions between the Uyghur and Han ethnic groups in Xinjiang, China. Sinaga, in his article, argues that ethnic Tensions between the Uyghur and Han ethnic groups are not a historical conflict, but rather a social construct shaped by changing political systems and state policies over time. Conflict in the Perspective of Constructivism," which explains the pattern of interaction between ethnic groups. It is about Uyghurs' Muslim ethnicity, who struggle to preserve their ethnic identity and fight against the Chinese government, including human rights violations, restrictions on religious practices and language.

Gulshan Majeed (2013) in his paper provides a detailed explanation that conflict rarely occurs unless social inequalities, economic disparities, and political factors trigger it. Ethnic differences can create conflict due to an imbalance between them, influenced by various factors such as economic inequality, power sharing, external factors, socio-cultural settings, and rivalries. Ethnic conflict occurs when their form is messed up, deprived and treated unjustly. Majeed discussed three theories on ethnic conflict. The Primordialism theory views ethnic identities as a natural and ancient hatred. He points out that conflicts do not happen in isolation but require triggers. Instrumentalism theory that ethnic identities are viewed as tools for elites to mobilise the ethnic group to gain power. Lastly, constructivist theory emphasises that ethnic identities are socially constructed and have transformed over time, rather than being fixed due to external influences, such as politics.

In his article, Dr. Shyamal Kataria (2018) reviewed how ethnicity is an inescapable facet of our social reality. He explains the two principal schools of thought on ethnicity — primordialism and instrumentalism — and assesses their strengths. Primordialism (including socio-biological and cultural perspectives/) interprets ethnicity as naturally, or at least organically, formed through time. Instrumentalism (including elitist and social engineering perspectives/) perceives ethnicity in principally rational, top-down terms. This article aims to review impartially and, where possible, scrutinise both perspectives in an attempt to arrive at a more precise and considered understanding of ethnicity. These have been scrutinised to assess their strength in explaining the formation and persistence of ethnicity. Therefore, ethnic identities are shaped by a combination of natural phenomena and manipulation.

Thomson, C. (2018) paper describes Instrumental and constructivist perspectives, focusing on when ethnic identity is made politically salient by different actors. Another theory by Williams, Dodeye. (2015). How useful are the Main Existing Theories of Ethnic Conflict? This article explains the causes of ethnic conflict and categorises them into three major theories of ethnic conflict: primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism. Each of these theories has specific assumptions regarding the origin of ethnic identities, and consequently, they reflect different causes of ethnic conflict.

### **Studies on the Causes of Ethnic Conflict:**

P.N. Rastogi (1986) discusses the prevalence of ethnic conflict in a plural society where each ethnic group is characterised by a high level of consciousness of kind among its members. In his study, he found that perceived grievances, deprivation, and non-reciprocated expectations of the ethnic communities toward one another are the primary reasons for ethnic conflicts among various social groups. Furthermore, he argues that all these result from historically constructed cultural variations that persist among diverse ethnic groups. In his opinion, people's awareness of this issue and positive thinking may provide ideas and offer a theoretical basis for a logically consistent explanation, predictive interference, and requirements for problem-solving ethno-social conflicts in Indian society.

Sasanka Perera (2008) 'focuses on ethnic conflict and its underlying root in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan society is an ethno-religious mosaic, and within the ethnic groups, there are clear religious divisions between Hindus and Muslims, particularly in the northern and eastern provinces. The basic causes and consequences of ethnic conflict are closely interlinked, including ethnic politics, the interpretation of the past, the politics language politics, ethnic conflict in education, and the land disputes'.

Aheibam Koireng Singh (2008) provides insights into the various factors that contributed to the casualties of the clash. It includes the colonial past, traditional rivalry, instrumentation by elites, intolerance of the ethnic armies, struggle for control over land and resources, and bad governance.

Naomi Weir (2012) in his paper, a central theme of this module is that conflict seemingly inspired by ethnic hatred is driven by the aims of political leaders. Here, the author discusses the ethnic conflict and dispute between the Hutu and the Tutsi within a single national Rwandan identity. The author argues that the elites' manipulation had been responsible for the tension between Rwanda's ethnic groups.

Mustapha Salihu (2019) explained the various issues of ethnic conflict in Kaduna, Nigeria, where clashes occur between the Muslim north and the Christian south communities, over

political and economic struggle. Elites manipulate ethnic and religious identities. Mustapha, in this study, mentioned that ethnic issues in Kaduna state are due to religious factors and their impact. There is a need for sustainable peace and conflict resolution in Southern Kaduna State by aligning with certain groups and fostering a deeper understanding of the crisis, including land rights, governance, and the issue of injustice.

### **Studies on the Socio-economic Impact of Ethnic Conflict:**

Tamim, S.M (2024) examines the economic consequences of the ongoing conflict, the impact of the Israel-Palestinian conflict on world markets and the global financial system. This explained and addressed the impact of conflict on the development of international trade and economic stability. The impact has led to the rise in the refugee crisis beyond the borders. Neighbouring countries like Lebanon, already in financial crisis, and Jordan, with high external debt exceeding its GDP, disrupt domestic stability and impact the vital tourism sector. Similarly, Egypt's economic instability and decline in tourism happened due to the ongoing conflict.

Downman, S.A. (2005) discussed and examined the case of the Hmong ethnicity in Australia. The growing ethnic tension between Intra-ethnic groups in Australia has a direct impact on the social, cultural, and traditional kinship functions of the community. Furthermore, the Hmong show lost some of their Hmongness, even leading to the surrender of their traditional values, and the challenges they faced once arriving in Australia brought a much greater problem- protecting their culture. Hmong ethnic faces consequences due to religious conversion becoming even more marginalised, changes with new rules and primordial ethnicity.

### **Impact of Ethnic Conflict and Women:**

Meryem Bahadir (2023) discusses and mentions the precise struggles of Manipur women during the horrific conflict between the communities. Women had been subjected to various forms of violence and discrimination. Ethnic conflict had a practice of using women's bodies as a battlefield and as a form of revenge. The demand concerted to address safety for women and also causes that perpetuate gender based violence and inequality.

Hattie Phelps (N.D.) examines the differences that women face in the conflict zone. Due to the unstable situation, the Wartime displacement of Women and Children was high. In many situations, men are expected to fight, and women are forced to flee with their children. In such times, women bear the responsibility of ensuring their safety and that of their families. This paper explains the disproportionate effects of war and conflict, making women more vulnerable in several ways, including food insecurity, displacement, gender base and racial discrimination, heightened human trafficking, and disrupted access to reproductive and health care. This study reveals that women's participation in peace agreements and negotiations is often excluded from these peace talks. Hence, a barrier that must be overcome in order to elicit actual progress.

Idlib (2023) explained the conflict in Syria and the gendered impact on women and girls. It discusses the conflict's impact on women and girls' inability to enjoy their fundamental rights, including access to health. Conflict had affected of female insufficient and struggle to meet basic needs and rise of early, forced marriages, increasing number of widows and increased of violent abuse and rape.

### **Studies on Ethnic Conflict Management:**

Ghebretekle, T.B. & Rammala, M. (2018) while explaining on conflict management stated that democratisation in a divided society, such as Ethiopia, requires an innovative electoral system in which inter-ethnic compromises and coalitions should be a norm, aiming to mitigate the recurrent risk of inclusion and exclusion from politics, and thereby contribute to managing ethnic conflicts.

Tarh Ramya (2014) discussed the traditional conflict mechanism of Arunachal Pradesh, which significantly contributes to promoting harmony, peace, and development among the Nyishi tribe in Kurung district, Arunachal Pradesh. It explains the importance of land and the actual causes of land conflict within the community. Arunachal Pradesh, where, to a large extent, the majority of the population relies on agriculture for their livelihood. The remaining people are use land for other activities such as animal farming and planting. The unequal distribution of land, greed and land sharing are major causes of land conflict among the

Nyishi people. It also explains the role of traditional approaches in resolving land conflict among the Nyishi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.

Francis S. Cheerangal (2016) has explained the traditional governance among the Yimkhiung tribe and the functions of administration. He mentioned in detail Kiulongthuru, the village owner, who is the governing authority. However, the modernisation of village management has shifted decision-making to 'political power', making villagers mere pawns. Thus, the value system of the traditional village organisation tends to fragment, and unique ways of governing pass into history.

Dr. Temjensang, (2017) discussed Ao naga age old practice of traditional governance institution which called as *Putu menden* in Ao local vernacular which mean 'generation seat' meaning a generation of people or an age group of people are chosen to be the representatives in the institution of governance for a specific period i.e 30 years in Ao Naga society. The Ao Putu Menden is formed around the representative of the Clans, with elements of hierarchy in the organisational structure, where the chief/leader occupies a post while others occupy the post of assistant. A social division of labour is maintained and has a role in the organisation. The village government is the ultimate authority in administering the village. The Ao Naga governing organisation is so strong that it has continued to rely on it for many centuries, even after the modern era began.

### **Research Gap:**

The ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities remains poorly understood due to several critical gaps in existing research. First, there is a notable lack of historical documentation and scholarly literature on the origins and key developments of both communities, making it difficult to trace the roots of inter-ethnic tensions. Second, existing studies rarely explore the gradual evolution of these tensions, particularly the socio-cultural and political factors that have shaped inter-community relations over time. Another major gap lies in the limited examination of how ethnic identity and traditional practices influence both conflict and reconciliation.

**Statement of the Problem:**

The Yimkhiung Nagas, residing in the remote and economically disadvantaged eastern part of Nagaland along the Indo-Myanmar border, are among the most marginalised Naga tribes. In recent decades, the rise of tribal and sub-tribal consciousness has led to internal rivalries within the Yimkhiung community. A prominent example is the Tikhir community, a minority sub-linguistic group within the larger Yimkhiung tribe, which has mobilised for recognition as a distinct tribe. Territorial claims have accompanied this movement, triggering intra-tribal tensions. The resulting conflict has led to violent confrontations, social divisions, and the displacement of affected individuals, many of whom have migrated to urban centres in search of safety and livelihood.

The conflict has had far-reaching consequences, including a breakdown of social cohesion, economic insecurity, and a pervasive sense of fear and uncertainty among community members. Despite the severity of these issues, there is a noticeable lack of scholarly research exploring the intersection of language, identity, ethnic assertion, and state policy in this context. Moreover, the perspectives of key stakeholders—particularly women, youth, and displaced persons—remain largely absent in existing studies. This thesis seeks to address these critical gaps by investigating the socio-political dynamics underlying the Yimkhiung–Tikhir conflict. It aims to explore how identity politics and community narratives contribute to both conflict and potential peacebuilding efforts. The findings are expected to inform not only academic discourse but also policy frameworks relevant to ethnic relations and governance in Nagaland.

**Research Questions:**

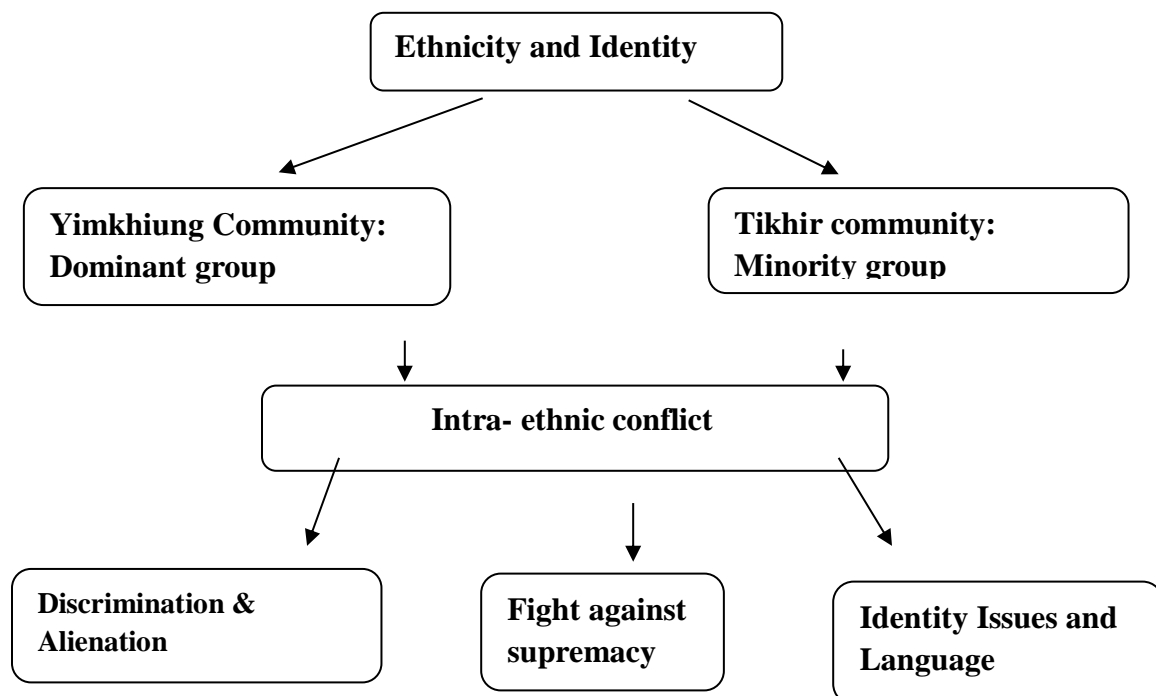
- 1) What is the historical background of the Yimkhiung and Tikhir conflict?
- 2) What factors lead to the formation of various sub-identities among the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Nagas Tribes?
- 3) What is the role of Language and identity in Yimkhiung and Tikhir Nagas' everyday life?
- 4) What is the perception of both communities towards the ethnic conflict?

- 5) How are the Yimkhiung tribe people adapting to changing in the scenarios of multiple linguistic identities?
- 6) How did ethnic conflict emerge among the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Nagas communities?
- 7) How has ethnic conflict affected people's in terms of socio-cultural, economic and political dimensions?
- 8) What are the mediating methods used by the government and leaders in resolving the ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Nagas Tribes?

**Objectives of the study:**

1. To understand the historical background of the Ethnic Identity and Conflict
2. To examine factors contributing to the ethnic conflict
3. To explain the socio-cultural, economic and political impact of ethnic conflict
4. To describe the conflict management process in the communities

**Chart 1.1: Ethnic identity and its conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities**



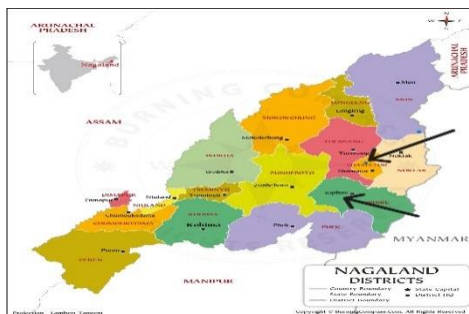
This figure.1 explained the ethnic identity conflict between the two communities. The Yimkhiung is the dominant group, while the minority Tikhir dialect-speaking group is the minority. The source of the conflict is related to issues of identity, discrimination, and alienation. The ethnic tension and struggle between the two communities, Yimkhiung and Tikhir Nagas, revolve around the position of the ethnic group within society and their desire to preserve their identity.

### **Significance of Study:**

This study is vital for the following reasons. Firstly, the study are essential for researchers who investigate conflicts and focus on the communities between Yimkhiung and the sub-dialect Tikhir, as well as the intra-ethnic conflicts and their impact on the socio-economic growth of the study area due to ethnic violence. Such a study is also important to know the causes of the perpetual conflict. Secondly, this study serves as a reference for the government's role in addressing ethnic issues. Lastly, the study helps identify possible solutions based on the community's recommendations and opinions on how to manage ethnic violence.

### **Research Methodology:**

**Figure 1.2: Map of the study area.**



### **Study Area:**

The present study was conducted in the Shamator and Kiphire districts of Nagaland, predominantly inhabited by the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga tribes. According to the 2011

Population and Housing Census, Shamator has a population of approximately 32,223. The district is primarily agrarian, with over 85% of households engaged in agricultural activities. Culturally and historically, the inhabitants of Shamator identify as descendants of the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes. Socially, both communities practice monogamy, consistent with broader Naga customs. The respondents for this work were also selected from faraway towns, such as Mokokchung, Kohima, and Dimapur, with a particular focus on collecting data from those who had migrated due to the conflict. These diverse field sites provided a broad and comparative perspective on the dynamics of language, identity, and ethnic relations among the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities in Nagaland.

### **Tools of Data Collection:**

This study employed both primary and secondary sources to gather reliable and comprehensive data. A mixed-method approach was adopted to ensure depth and triangulation in understanding the complex dynamics of identity, language, and ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities.

#### **1. Primary Data Collection:**

Primary data were gathered through intensive fieldwork conducted in selected villages inhabited by the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities. The key tools used for primary data collection include the following:

#### **Interviews:**

Face-to-face interviews were conducted using a pre-prepared interview guide. These interviews enabled the researcher to explore respondents' personal experiences, community histories, and perceptions related to ethnic conflict, identity, and cultural transformation. Interviewees were selected across various age groups and genders to capture a diversity of perspectives. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, the identities of some participants have been anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

**Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):**

FGDs were conducted to elicit community-level narratives and to encourage interactive dialogue among participants. Open-ended questions guided discussions, and participants were encouraged to share their opinions freely. The researcher used non-verbal cues, such as smiles or nods, to assess group consensus and recorded the most widely agreed-upon viewpoints.

**Questionnaires:**

Due to travel restrictions and safety concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic, questionnaires were distributed in remote locations where physical access was limited. As conditions normalised, the data collection strategy shifted toward direct interviews to enhance data quality and reduce delays.

**Case Studies:**

Select case studies were developed based on in-depth interviews with individuals or families directly affected by the conflict. These provided rich qualitative insights into how ethnic tensions have influenced identity, displacement, inter-community relations, and daily life.

**2. Secondary Data Collection**

Secondary data were collected from a range of documentary sources, including books, journal articles, monographs, tribal council documents, newspapers, magazines, census and demographic data. These materials were used to provide contextual background, support historical analysis, and complement findings from primary sources. Secondary data helped substantiate key themes, including the evolution of ethnic identity, state policy responses, and socio-political developments in Nagaland.

**Table 1 .1: Respondents number**

Location of respondents		Community		Total
		Yimkhiung	Tikhir	
Shamator	Sangphur village	41(31)	33(25)	74(56)
	Yakor village			
	Shamator village			
Kiphire	Kiusam village	1(1)	25(19)	26(20)
	Monteger village			
	Chikiponger village			
	Longtsunger village			
Dimapur	Shwaba village	9(7)	3(2)	12(9)
	Zani village			
Mokokchung	Town	6(4)	0(0)	6(4)
Kohima	Town	4(3)	9(7)	13(10)
Mon	Town	0(0)	2(2)	2(2)
<b>Total no.</b>		<b>61(46)</b>	<b>72(54)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

### **Sampling Framework:**

This study employed a combination of stratified sampling and snowball sampling methods to select participants from the target communities. This combined strategy was used to ensure both representativeness and access to key informants in a context marked by sensitivity and trust-based communication needs.

**Stratified Random Sampling:** Stratified sampling was used to ensure representation across the two main communities under study—the Yimkhiung Nagas and the Tikhir Nagas—within the Shamator district. Respondents were drawn from various demographic and occupational strata, including: Employees, Church workers, Farmers, Village elders, Dobashis (traditional village judges), Youth representatives. By stratifying the population based on tribe and social roles, the study aimed to capture a wide range of perspectives and lived experiences about the ethnic conflict.

**Snowball Sampling:** Snowball sampling was used particularly in areas where trust and access were limited or where potential respondents were known to possess valuable experiential or narrative knowledge. This technique made it possible for the researcher to reach those individuals who were affected by violence and displacement, particularly in urban settlements and remote villages, who might not be easily reachable through conventional methods.

**Sampling Locations and Population:** The final sample was drawn from seven villages and three towns, which were chosen based on their relevance to the ethnic conflict as well as the demographic distribution of the Yimkhiung and Tikhir populations. The selected areas are mentioned in Table 1.1

**Sample Size and Composition:** A total of 133 respondents in all were chosen from the different sampling sites. Efforts were made to ensure inclusivity and balance in gender representation. Of the total sample, 71% were female and 29% were male. This gender imbalance reflects the greater willingness and availability of women to participate in the study, especially in focus group settings and community discussions. By combining stratified and snowball sampling methods, the study ensured both representativeness and depth, which are essential in conflict-sensitive ethnographic research.

**Data Analysis:**

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques to ensure a thorough understanding of the ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities.

**Quantitative Data Analysis:**

Quantitative data, primarily collected through structured questionnaires, were systematically coded and entered into Microsoft Excel and analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The analysis focused on descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations, to understand the primary demographic characteristics of the respondents, including age, gender, occupation, educational level, and community

background. This helped in identifying patterns, correlations, and trends within and across the sampled populations.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Qualitative data were gathered through personal interviews, focus group discussions, and case studies. These were analysed through thematic analysis, where emerging themes and recurring narratives were identified, categorised, and interpreted about the research objectives.

This combined approach, which utilised statistical tools for structured data and thematic interpretation for qualitative inputs, allowed the researcher to triangulate findings and derive rich, multidimensional insights from the field.

### **Challenges to the researcher during data collection:**

1. Collecting data was very challenging until the end of the field study, as the particular community was reluctant to provide information and refused to cooperate due to internal community issues.
2. The researcher failed to gather sufficient data, since many respondents from local communities affected by ethnic conflict struggled to share their sorrowful experiences with the researcher.
3. The researcher not only faced problems in obtaining approval from the host community for interviews, but data collection was also changed to a questionnaire method, as conducting direct interviews was not permissible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, to continue without interruption, the questionnaire was sent to the respondents.
4. The researcher provided a clear explanation of the study's purpose before the interview to build trust and reduce anxiety. However, some respondents were approached and apprehensive the next day to withdraw all the collected data, even take back the researcher's hard copies of the interview schedule. Some respondents feared that their identity would be misused or disclosed. This results from the mental

trauma and insecurity because of past events of violence, so they deny participating in such interviews.

5. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, the researcher had to discontinue the scheduled interviews and other data collection activities, resulting in a prolonged data collection period.
6. Neither of the communities properly documented their historical past, making it difficult for researchers to rely on secondary data. Furthermore, no literature work was found on the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities, which posed a significant challenge and limitation.

### **Chapterisation:**

Regarding the chapter structure, the study was divided into seven chapters. The first two chapters are introduction, with the literature review and the demographic profile of the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribe. The following four chapters are based on the primary and secondary data collection from field study area. The final chapter summarizes the main finding and recommendation.

### **Chapter I - Introduction**

Chapter one presents a comprehensive background to the study, outlining the introduction and setting the stage for subsequent chapters. The Introduction section highlights the significance of understanding the role of language in shaping ethnic identity and the social dynamics within these communities. The theoretical framework section discusses theories on ethnic identity and conflict theory to analyse the role of language and ethnic conflict. The conceptual framework outlines the study of concepts such as language, identity, ethnic conflict, and socio-economic development. Here, it outlines the literature review, problem statement, objectives, research questions, significance and scope of study, methodology, as well as limitations anticipated during the study.

## **Chapter II - Ethnographic Profile of Yimkhiung And Tikhir Nagas**

This chapter explains the demographic profile of the community and their socio-economic life culture of the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga tribes. It covers aspects of their community and social norms of both tribes. A detailed examination of the historical origin and settlement of Yimkhiung and Tikhir Nagas. The role of festivals and other cultural practices of both communities.

## **Chapter III -History of Ethnic Identity Assertion and Conflict**

In this Chapter, a detailed historical background of ethnic identity, concerning both the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes, is presented. Furthermore, the chapter aimed to elucidate the relationship between language, ethnicity, and identity. It discussed the initiatives and movements taken by various tribal organisations in the demand for rights.

## **Chapter IV - Causes of Ethnic Conflict**

Chapter Four discusses the causes of ethnic conflict between Yimkhiung and Tikhir, along with detailed data analysis and discussions of findings from all sources of data collected through interviews and field studies. It describes the details by investigating the origin of the conflict and the escalation of tensions between these two tribes, as narrated by the respondents.

## **Chapter V - Socio-Economic Impact of Ethnic Conflict**

Chapter five discussed the impact of ethnic conflict on livelihoods, economy, family life, the lives of women and youth, education, and social relations. A detailed analysis of the information and findings gathered reflects the actual experiences of those affected by ethnic conflict.

## **Chapter VI - Strategies for Conflict Resolution**

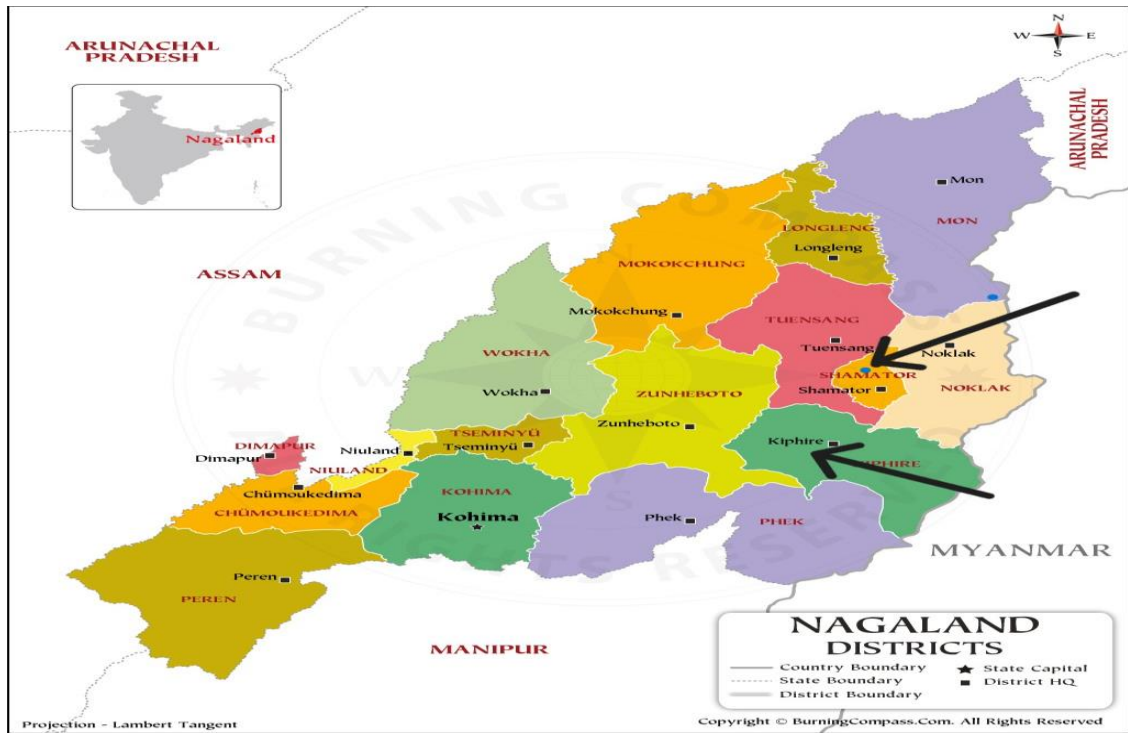
Chapter Six explores strategies for conflict resolution and examines traditional conflict resolution methods from around the world, as well as the conflict resolution practices of indigenous peoples in Northeast India. It explained the significant role and limitations of

traditional conflict resolution in tribal communities. It discussed indigenous dispute resolution used by the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities. Finally, the role of the Nagaland state government was explained to resolve the conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities.

## **Chapter VII - Summary and Conclusion**

The final Chapter includes a summary of the thesis's findings, as well as conclusions and recommendations for the study.

# NAGALAND STATE MAP



## SHAMATOR DISTRICT MAP



## KIPHIRE DISTRICT MAP



## Chapter II

### ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF YIMKHIUNG AND TIKHIR NAGAS

#### **Introduction:**

‘Northeast India is the easternmost region of India known for its unique cultural diversity, charismatic beauty, and strategic importance. It comprises eight states, known as the Seven Sisters: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. Northeast India shares international borders with neighbouring countries: the Tibet Autonomous Region, China, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh. Northeast India has over 200 recognised tribes, with many of its customs, governance systems and a distinct linguistic mosaic, comprising numerous languages, including Assamese, Nagamese, Bodo, Deori, Khasi, and Meitei.<sup>1</sup> Some Major tribal groups include: Nagas (Nagaland), Mizos (Mizoram), Garos and Jaintias (Meghalaya) and Chakmas, Tripuris (Tripura). Northeast is a state with religious plurality, including Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam.

#### **PROFILE OF YIMKHIUNG NAGAS**

The Yimkhiung Naga is one of the major Naga tribes in Nagaland and the second-largest community in the multilingual Tuensang district. According to the 2011 census, its population is 74,647. However, according to the Yimkhiung tribal council, the population is 115,000 (Imlangba, 2024, para. 1). The total area of Shamator is 192.71 square kilometres, with a population density of 66 square metres per square kilometre. The tribe inhabits the eastern region, with a predominant presence in the eastern areas of the districts of Shamator and Tuensang. They are sparsely distributed in districts such as Dimapur, Kohima, and Mokokchung in the state of Nagaland. The Yimkhiung villages are scattered and established autonomously in two districts of Shamator and Kiphire, with five ranges: Pungro, Thsorungto, Mankgo, Kewung, and Shamator town, Shamator village, and Showubah (near

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<sup>1</sup> North east India, The unexplored paradise. Far horizon tours India  
<https://www.farhorizontours.com/india/north-east>

Dimapur). They are divided into clans, such as *Jangru*, *Jankhuingru*, *Khiungru*, *Khiphur*, *Kusunkhuingru*, and *Limkhiung Khiungru*. Moreover, like other Naga tribes, the Yimkhiungrüs have mongoloid features' (Yimkhiunggrutruk, 2017, para.1). As revealed by some respondents, the Yimkhiung tribe was previously composed of brave warriors whose status was defined by the number of headhunts, the feast of merit, and their bloodline. They were known for their violence and aggression, but it was easy to reconcile their nature. Yimkhiung Naga men take pride in their heroic past, bravery, valour, and courage, all qualities regarded as inherent in their blood. It is believed that they were famed for their hospitality and charity, for which other neighbouring tribes, such as the Sumi, Sangtam, and Khamniungan, had come seeking refuge and lived together for many decades before being forced to change due to modernisation.

#### **Historical Origin and Settlement of Yimkhiung:**

Yimkhiung is derived from two words: Yim, meaning "to search," and khiung, meaning "those who have reached their desired destination." Therefore, Yimkhiunger / Yimkhiung means 'the one who has searched and reached' (Lakiumong, 2000, p. 11). Although it is not possible to determine the precise period of the Yimkhiung Naga tribes' migration and settlement, there is sufficient historical evidence to show that the Yimkhiung Nagas have been living in their present habitat or region for a long time. According to Yimkhiung, their traditional territory encompasses the Shamator and Kiphire districts in the state of Nagaland, India and the western areas of Myanmar. The "Yimkhiung" are also referred to as "Yimchunger" by other tribes, and likewise, the Sumis call them Yachumi (also spelt Yatsumi or Yachimi). The Khamniungans call them Mongtsohai, whereas the Chang tribe call the Yimkhiung the Yamshong. Furthermore, the Sangtam refer to them as Yachungre. It is said that, since time immemorial, Yimkhiung's ancestors are claimed to have migrated from the east and established their settlements, and later, they moved in different directions (Das, 2014, pp. 45-53).

Yimkhiung is not the only tribe; the other Naga ethnic groups lack written records of their origin and history as they do not have a script for the Naga languages. The Yimkhiung lived

a nomadic life before moving from one place to another and settling in their present-day habitats. Every race and group has migrated and has its origin story, which was left behind. However, as per 'YBBA mentioned', scientific studies and the narration of historical accounts, it was known that the origin of the Yimkhiungs Naga is believed to be in Thailand (Das, 2014, p. 39). Like the other Nagas, the Yimkhiung tribe also mostly led a nomadic life, staying in one place for more than a few generations. They continue to make their living by cultivating the land until it meets the growing needs for food and other forms of sustenance. However, once natural resources and the need for more land were no longer available, the entire population was compelled to evacuate their village and shift to another place. Other reasons for relocating to a safer area included avoiding diseases like plague and epidemics. Primarily to escape attacks by headhunters in neighbouring villages.

The following are names of various historical locations and ancient sites of the journey of the Yimkhiung tribe, who emigrated from East to West. Those locations were once significant to this community, such as Chiru, Lungyang, Thünyimkiulung, Mihbukbung, Tüpfung, Thsünkioso, Keimiphu, Tükhean, Yingphu, YimkhiungAwün, Langa, Kiso, Mündün, Tangmyeang Wungdo, and Thsürungdo. The tribe moved through several villages, including Chiru, Lungyang and Thunyimkiulung, before settling in another place. Thrurungdo is now the administrative headquarters of the EAC post. Early settlements like Yimkhiung Awun formed a significant part of their identity. In Thsünkioso, the location where people still inhabited, some attempts by residents from Kuthur village had been made to re-establish this ancient village by migrating to the location. Some households have come up today, but now that village is no longer regarded. Mundun, an ancient location that was once abandoned, has now been revived by the Yimkhiung Tribal Council. The place celebrates cultural heritage, such as the annual Mini Hornbill Festival of the Yimkhiung, organised under the aegis of the Nagaland State Government. 'It has become a revived heritage for various festivals and other important occasions. The different locations are abandoned and devoid of human habitation. Those places or locations remain critical historical sites of the Yimkhiung tribe for all times (Yimkhiungruthruk, 2020, Para. 20). According to the YBBA, the route of migration of the Yimkhiung from Thailand lies through Burma (Myanmar); this ethnic group has been moving for a long time. Again, from Burma

to Moru (in India) and from Moru to Chiru to Longyang and Longyang to Thunyimkiulong, it has two words: Thunyim means fifty, and Kiulong means village. - thus, a village of 50 (within the Indian territory). After that, from Thunyimkiulong to Tuphungkiulong (near Bokphur village), and from Tuphungkiulong to Thsunkioso village (presently known as Thonoknyu village), and from Thsunkioso to Kemiphu, on the banks of Thurakke, also popularly known as the Zungkiriver. After that, from Kemiphu to TukheaKhup village, located below Wapher (Wungphung) village on the riverbank of the Zungki (Yimkhkungthruk, 2020, para.4-7).

The Zungki River is one of the most prominent rivers, which flows from the northeastern part of the Changdong forest in the south of Teku. It runs south through the Noklak and Shamator regions and joins Tizu below Kiphire. At each place of settlement, some portion of the group will search for a new location with more land and sufficient natural resources they need for a substantial life, leaving behind the remaining members as permanent citizens of that village (Ibid, para.4). While they were settling at Tukhea Khup, a group of people from the village took a fishing trip to the Yayi River and the Zungki (Thurakke) riverbanks. 'At the same time, on their journey, they discovered burnt charcoal and partially burnt firewood, which had floated down from the Yayi River. After discovering charcoal, they became more curious about other human settlements and moved towards the Yayi River. Accordingly, the entire group moved farther upstream along the Yayi River in search of other human settlements. Finally, they found a place where they discovered signs of various human activities, such as clearing the jungle for habitation and land already used for cultivation' (Yimkhkungthruk, 2020, paras. 5-7).

Having found signs of other human activities around this place, they called it Yimkhiungto, meaning "found it." As time went on and the population grew, the settlers retained the name of this place as Yimkhiung or Yimchung. The residents in this place were known as Yimkhiungrü, and the village now stands as Yimchung Awun, which translates to Yimchung Old and is commonly referred to as Y. Awun village today. Ancestors Before the establishment of this village, there was no known name for the group as a community or an

ethnic group. At each place of the series of settlements, not the entire population was on the move in search of new fertile land; those time not entire village but seems those times life was not so easy; it was only those who were defensive and able people who dared to face life and continued to move on from place to another place after several years of residing at a place and even for two to three generations at specific place, in search of fertile soil and more land to cultivate to meet the needs of their ever-growing population. This is how forefathers built land and formed villages, and today, nearly 125 villages are under the Yimkhiung tribe. The ethnic group resides in a particular area for 10 to 50 years at most, unless there is a need for additional land to cultivate. Thus, it was at Yimchung Awun (now Y.Awun village), one of the oldest villages and a significant marker of their identity, that the settlers came to be called the Yimkhiungers or Yimchungrus. The name Yimkhiungrü later became diluted to Yimchungers, Yachongre, Yachumi, and Yamshong by other Naga neighbouring tribes, particularly in the eastern inhabited ethnic groups, such as Sumi, Konyak, Chang, Sangtam, and Khiamniungan, and played a role in the linguistic shift, through Scouts and Dobashis who accompanied British explorers.<sup>2</sup>

Shamator was recognised as a separate district in 2022. Shamator headquarters has a total of 11 villages and all of which are located in the eastern part of Nagaland. The Shamator jurisdiction includes Yakor, Kihoto Theological College campus, Sangphur, Chassor, Meleangkiur, Shamator NAP post, Liankonger, Shamator headquarters, Shamator village, Waphur, and Lasikiur.<sup>3</sup> The Yimkhiung tribe predominantly inhabits all these villages.

### **Family, Marriage and Kinship:**

In the Yimkhiung community, the family is the smallest social unit. Clans are groups of many families with the same bloodline. The six major clans within the yimkhiung tribes are Jankhiungru, Jangru, khiungru, khipuru and Kusenkhiungru' (Imlangba, 2024, para.3). In a village, residential colonies are built clan-wise, and these colonies are known as Khels. 'A village may consist of several khels. Traditionally, among the Yimkhiung, women are

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<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yimkhiung\\_Naga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yimkhiung_Naga)

<sup>3</sup> <https://shamator.nic.in/village-panchayats/>

expected to possess authentically feminine qualities and be subordinate to men. Every adult woman should be able to cultivate, cook, manage a home, child care, and look after both men's and women's welfare. The Yimkhiung tribe does not practice any sort of slavery' (Yimkhiungrutruk, 2017, para.2)

### **Customary Laws on Marriage:**

'Yimkhiung adults, both men and women, have the freedom to choose their future partner. 'Society does not allow for sexual freedom before marriage. Those who are caught are subject to penalties imposed by the authorities. Pregnancy outside of marriage is considered taboo. The process of engagement and marriage procedures varies by tribe' (Yimkhiungrutruk, 2017, para.13). However, the accepted and commonly practised are enumerated below:

'If a boy has chosen a girl for marriage, he must inform his parents, and if the girl's side is positive and willing to discuss it. Then, the boy's parents will meet the girl's parents to propose marriage. In this meeting, both families must discuss their lineage, background, and status; if there is any doubt, they can cancel further approaches. If they have some unfavourable opinions, then they can disapprove of the marriage proposal. Once the discussion and consultation are over, both parents may set a date for the engagement. For the engagement ceremony, the boy's family brings costly gifts, such as a spear and a shawl, and presents them to the girl's parents in honour of the acceptance of the engagement' (Yimkhiugruthruk, 2017, para.14).

'The Yimkhiung community prohibit marriage within the same clan or between cousins. It is considered immoral and taboo. Violators are excommunicated, and the women and children from such a relationship are shunned by society. 'No secret marriage by elopement could be just ignored by society and family members. On the other hand, it can be legalised by a formal marriage ceremony. However, one must go through the entire process of marriage laws and regulations' (Yimkhiugruthruk, 2017, para.15).

After the couple's engagement, they will be formally married soon. Before a couple officially becomes husband and wife, they are allowed to eat from the same plate, but are not allowed

to sleep together in the same bed. A marriage ceremony is fixed in specific and is marked by a celebration of eating, drinking, and making merry. In the evening, after the marriage ceremony, the couple, parents, and relatives gather for a meeting where the elders encourage and share other aspects of social life with the newlyweds. The relatives and family members are advised and cautioned to the newly couple about the consequences of adultery or an indifferent attitude towards the wife and husband. The welcome gesture is shown by both sides to indicate that they have been accepted as new family members hereafter. Both sides, relative and family, for another three or four days are devoted to sharing meat, gifts and a feast. The relatives of both sides invite the newlywed couples for a formal introduction and a feast in honour of their marriage. In the yimkhiung tradition, the bride is expected to stay at her parents' home for a couple of weeks after the marriage. During her stay, she must learn all the basic skills and techniques of homemaking and childcare. Her parents and relatives ensure that she has all the necessary things and gifts that are entitled to her. She then settles down into her new home with her husband.

‘It is tradition, every mother asks for her share of the gift or the price from her son-in-law for raising the girl. This is called the “*BERU TUN*” (mother's price) in the Yimkhiung dialect. The mother’s price may range from pigs, cows, and mithuns or be paid in cash. It is customary for the Yimkhiung people to give this share at any cost unless the mother decides not to take it. If the mother's share is not provided, it is considered all treats and is liable to be penalised by his husband's family. This is how the Yimkhiung Naga marriage procedure typically takes place. However, customs are adhered to during the marriage ceremony, but they are not mandatory’ (yimkhiungrutruk, 2017, para.19).

In Naga society, polygamy is not practised. However, in some situations, wealthy and affluent men marry multiple women. In Yimkhiung society, divorce does take place, but only in cases of bigamy, adultery, or infidelity of either spouse. However, the divorce rates are higher in cases where the wife has committed adultery. Adultery and infidelity are not quickly cordoned off or forgiven; instead, punishment is harsh. The following rules and regulations are followed for a divorce to take place:

- ‘In a case where the wife is found guilty, the husband can decide to send her back to her parents' house immediately, and even the wife's side may have to reimburse the expenses paid to her family by the husband before the marriage. The wife is not entitled to claim children or any property from the husband.
- If the husband is the culprit, he divorces his wife because he wants to marry someone else. He must pay a heavy fine to his wife's family. However, if he decides not to leave his wife, he is not required to pay. He may have to share some of his property with history to hide property, and may also have to part with some of his children. Typically, when a divorce case arises, family members and relatives of both parties gather together and discuss the issue with the elders. Only two possibilities occur: a couple make compromises on the matter or the matter ends in divorce’ (Yimkhiungrutruk, para.22),

### **Inheritance Laws:**

According to the Yimkhiung community, ‘the law of inheritance, land and other immovable properties can only be inherited by male heirs. Because of the practices of the patriarchal system, women cannot inherit any property. However, in recent times, it has been discovered that the discretion lies with the father as to whether to give his daughters any land or immovable property, provided that the property is not inherited from his ancestors but is purchased by him. A father who has many sons may bestow some of the property. The Yimkhiung Naga, the eldest and youngest sons, inherit a significant share of the property. Usually, daughters inherit jewellery, dresses, and other items like furniture’ (Yimkhiungrutruk, para.5). ‘Suppose a man dies without a male heir; in that case, his brothers and nephews will automatically inherit his properties, who may further divide them among the paternal cousins of the same lineage. This is because his wife cannot claim the properties given to the man by his father or ancestors in any manner. If a man dies with debt, his children and paternal cousins will handle this situation. After the man's death, the family of the man will discuss the future life of his wife and children (if any) as well as decide the property issues. Only the properties accumulated during the marriage period will be shared by the deceased's heirs (sons and daughters); the family will decide to leave the properties to them

as they are the legal heirs. However, if there is no heir, the woman cannot inherit the property as custom dictates strictly. The family members ask her husband whether she will remain with the family or decide to leave for her father's house or her relatives. Everything is kept upon her decision; if she wants to get remarried, it is her choice after the completion of a specific period, but if she leaves her husband's house immediately and unilaterally after his demise, then her acts are considered quite serious and treated as a massive insult to the family of the man. In this case scenario, the woman is sent off with only a few things that belong to her' (Yimkhiungrutru, para.6). 'The lands and other immovable properties cannot be sold to other villages or non-locals. Each village has laws restricting the selling of landed and immovable property to people from other villages, except in rare cases. Each village, khel, clan, or group of families is permitted to jointly own land and other immovable properties, which become the common property of the group. No individual can sell or decide without the permission and consent of every member in the group' (Yimkhiungrutruk, para.7).

### **Life Cycle Rituals:**

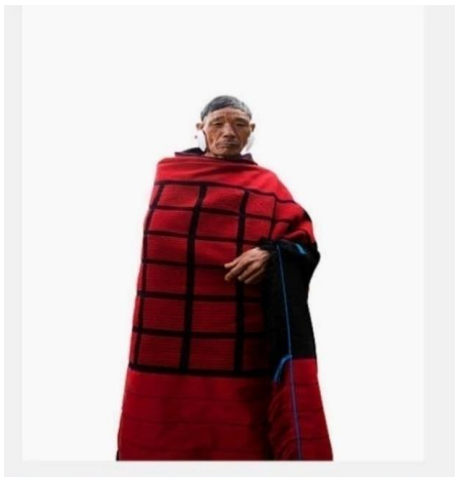
The Yimkhiung tribes have their customs and traditions to celebrate all life cycle rituals in the community. For instance, the naming ceremony for a baby girl is normally held on the sixth day, and for a baby boy, it is usually on the fifth day. However, many families prioritise the health of the mother and the child before the child's naming ceremony. Before the advent of Christianity in the Yimkhiung community, when death occurred, the dead bodies were placed on raised platforms, which would be subject to heat, rain, wind, birds, insects, etc. However, funerals are now held according to Christian rituals; family, relatives, and friends gather to mourn with farewell speeches and mass prayer before the coffins are taken away to be buried. After the funeral gathering, a farewell feast is hosted in honour of the deceased. The quality of the feast depends on the host's status and wealth. The town or village's normal cemetery is where dead bodies are buried. Some Yimkhiung Nagas would bury the dead of loved ones in their homes, gardens or compounds as an individual choice. Generally, family members refrain from going to work outside their homes for a few days after the funeral. It is customary and mandatory to kill an animal and share its meat with all of the relatives. Every utensil, plate and cup used for the funeral meal are cleaned and kept, and that is how ritual ends with this last process' (Yimkhiungtruk, 2017, para.4)

### **Community Life:**

‘Yimkhiung people are communal and follow well-established customary laws and social set-ups. Their community does not live isolated lives; they stay connected with their families. They work, play, and participate in all activities together as a community. The community offers a diverse range of activities, including games and sports, hunting and fishing, as well as fairs and festivals. The people play lots of outdoor and indoor games. A lot of merry-making, eating, and drinking mark the festival. People share meat and other locally harvested crops with those who visit them during this ceremonial occasion, spending time singing traditional songs and music’ (yimkhiungrutruk, para.2-3). They have a community cultivation practice, where a family initiates and invites relatives, friends, and neighbours for the harvest. It is the same even in community fishing, where many people gather to fish in the same river. Moreover, whoever took part did not go home empty-handed. Everyone gets their share, whether small or big.

### **Traditional Attire and Ornaments:**

**Fig. 2.1 Rongkhim shawl of Yimkhiung male**



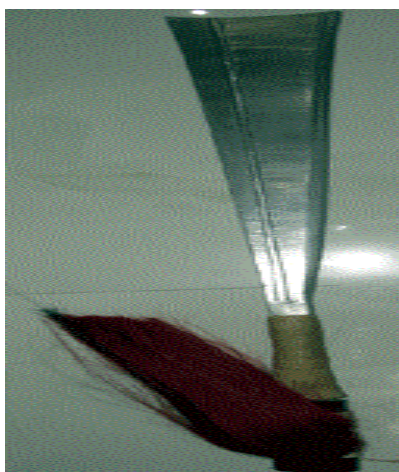
**Fig. 2.2 Headgear of Yimkhiung**



**Male Attire:** In the past, the Yimkhiung people wore attire according to their social status, such as warriors, venerated individuals, and wealthy men. For example, only males who could chop a man's head were allowed to wear a shawl known as ‘Rongkhim’ in the Yimkhiung dialect, also referred to as ‘Athrungru khim’ (the warrior's shawls). The individual would then be officially declared a warrior and would be entitled to wear this

shawl. However, such tradition is no longer visible, and anyone can wear these prestigious shawls in the present day. On the shawl, beads of cowry shells would also be woven. Again, these particular shawls could be worn only by the warrior, venerated and wealthy man. Even now, only the rich, affluent and educated wear this shawl. Menfolk used to wear earrings made of ivory, arm bracelets, and wrist bracelets made of ivory, as well as super fine-quality cane. ‘Yimkhiung headgear is rare to find these days, and it is extraordinary because it consists of fine hairs of animals and a pair of wild boar teeth, hornbill feathers and is woven out of the finest cane or bamboo. The nails of the tiger and bear would be attached to the string of rope at the bottom of the headgear’ (Yimkhiungrutru, para.6). ‘Menfolk used anklets of bear skins and wore leather belts attached to the Dao boxes of fine quality wood. During ceremonial dances, a small basket is attached to the rear of the dao (machete) box. The slight basket would be attached by a good bunch of long, silky hairs primarily obtained from women’ (Yimkhiungrutru, para.7). Menfolk were fond of getting tattoo on their chest and arms. Tattooing was confined only to these two regions. Menfolk wore suitable necklaces made of delicate beads of precious stones and varieties of ivory shells in various colours. They also wore tiger teeth and necklaces of brass, copper and silver.

***Fig. 2.3 Dao (Limthsunuk) of the Yimkhiung handle is decorated with hair.***



***Fig. 2.4 Langdam(Haft pant)***



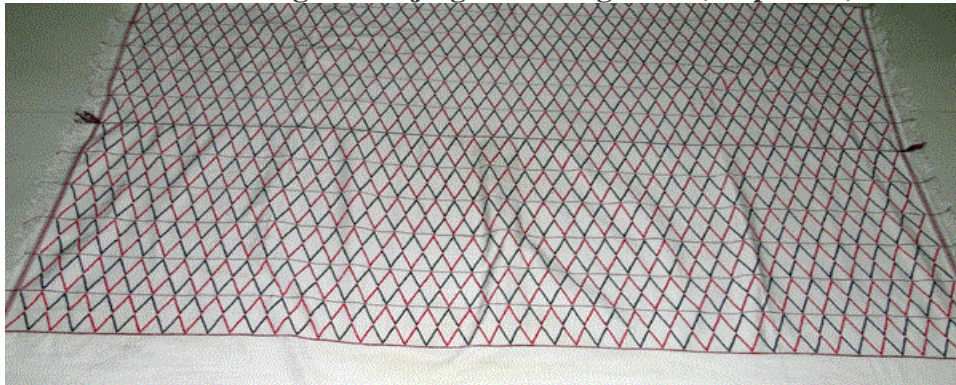
Men used spears made of refined iron or other alloys. Animal skins and hairs would be attached to the spear for a better grip. ‘Long before menfolk started using half pants/long

pants, they used a loincloth called ‘*Langdam*’,<sup>4</sup> woven with cotton threads. ‘During special ceremonial dances, men attached a spherical brass and steel disc to the front portion of the langdam. It produced a jingling sound, which gave tune to their singing while dancing.’ (Yimkhiungrutruk, para.7-8).

### **Women Attire:**

Long ago, the Yimkhiung people only used loincloths to cover themselves. From dresses made of cotton, tree bark, and leaves, it gradually led to wearing dresses made of animal skin. The advent of modernity introduced present-day fabrics that people began to use. However, the Yimkhiung people, even in earlier days, knew the art of locally dyeing fabrics; they used dyes obtained from specific plants. Since ancient times, the Yimkhiungrous have had a variety of shawls for both men and women, as well as a range of mekhela for women.

**Fig. 2.5 Kejingberu Rungthsun (strip cloth)**



Source - <https://yimkhiungrutruk.org/photo-gallery/>

‘*Rungthsun*’ is an essential part of Yimkhiung women's culture. ‘*Rungthsun*’ means strip cloth, or in Nagamese, Mekhela, which is wrapped around the waist tightly and made of a special material. The costume worn by women is ‘*Kejingberu Rungthsun*’. It is white, red, and black with a line design called ‘*Akezupun* and *wuhkhimukji*’. Every Yimkhiung woman wears it in formal events to mark special occasions.

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<sup>4</sup>‘*Kunungkuri*’ is one of the most attractive headgear worn by the shawl worn by Yimkhiung warriors.

**Fig. 2.6 Tsungrumkhim shawl**



**Fig. 2.7 Shihrolak necklace**



**Source -** <https://yimkhiungrutruk.org/photo-gallery/>

'*Tsungrumkhim*' is a shawl worn by Yimkhiung women of any age on formal occasions. Women wore delicate necklaces and bracelets made of brass, copper, lead, silver, zinc, and shells. The affluent wore a prestigious necklace called '*Shihrolak*'. Tattooing was confined to the forehead, chin, and legs. Women wear many varieties of shawls and Mekhela. Women used walking sticks made of brass or iron.

### **Housing Pattern:**

Before the establishment of towns, most villages were located on hilltops, which were necessary for defence purposes. Moreover, diseases and sickness were believed to be less common at high altitudes. Roads connecting villages were narrow, and people used to construct houses in clusters. Man and animals lived under the same roof. Homes were built with structures of wooden posts and bamboo. The roof would be of palm leaves or thatch with no ventilation. A house usually consists of three or four rooms. However, the drainage system was in good working order. The floor was always kept clean and dry. In the past, people used pots and plates made of clay, as well as cups and spoons made of wood or bamboo. Now, people have started to adopt only modern designs found in the markets, and even lifestyle has supplanted traditional culture. Earlier, ordinary beds made out of bamboo and wood were also used, but wealthy and affluent people used beds made or carved out of a single log. Now, people use steel, brass, modern cots, and so on. Generally, for the Nagas, it was a type of culture found in the front or back of the house, a '*Sadaam*' (platform)

constructed of wood and bamboo for leisure and rest. Separate barnhouses were also built to store grains.

**Food Habits:** The Yimkhiung people are fond of kholar (kidney beans), which grow abundantly. There are other varieties of kholar, the best of which is known as '*Jiphuyak*' and is available only in the Shamatore belt. Yimkhiung people are hardworking and do not lack crops; everything is grown on their farms, and very few buy it from markets. They cultivate rice, bamboo shoots, ginger, chili, potatoes, mustard seeds, millet, yam, corm, rhizome, cucumber, cabbage, mushrooms, beans, spring onions, brangle bumpkins, bottle gourds, and the Naga dal. Besides guava, mangoes, passion fruits, pears, peaches, soybeans, pineapples, oranges, bananas, big lemons, and walnuts are grown.

Moreover, apples from the Thanamir region have also become commercially available in Nagaland. The people also rear various domestic animals, including pigs, dogs, goats, buffaloes, and poultry. The Yimkhiung people are fond of fishing, and fisheries are commonly maintained and reared during the season in various styles. The Mithun is considered a rich man's animal, and his wealth is measured by the number of Mithun he possesses. Varieties of plants, along with their shoots, are eaten. Rice beer is one of the leading drinks of the Yimkhiung people, and it was traditionally served during ceremonial events. However, now, it is commonly not used as it is considered and believed to be a toxic drink.<sup>5</sup>

### **Religion:**

Their traditional religion was nature worship, and they followed animism. The people believed that there are creators, male and female. The male creator is called Thrunpuh, and the female is Thrunbe. They regarded the creator as God, who created this world and is responsible for everything, even every birth and death. They believed this creator was good, kind, benevolent, supreme, all-knowing, all-seeing, and present everywhere. Ancestors also believed that heaven existed for the good people and hell for the wrong people after death. The people also believed that the souls of the dead parents pay occasional visits to their

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<sup>5</sup>Yimkhiungruthruk, (2017)

children to see how they live. Christianity arrived in the Yimkhiung area when the headhunting practice was at its peak, and Sema was the first missionary to introduce Christianity and work among the Yimkhiung people in 1947.

**Morung (Traditional temple):**

Morung is considered the first house and temple. ‘The Yimkhiung people have a traditional temple, a community house called ‘*Khyeang Yam*’ in the village centre. It was a place where sacrifices were performed by the priest, especially when the heads of the enemies were brought to it. No person was allowed to enter. Only the ‘*Khiungpuh*’<sup>6</sup> were responsible for looking after and taking care of it. Ordinary men and women were prohibited from going near it, except warriors. Whenever a new village is about to be formed, people first construct a morung. However, many are confused regarding the terms ‘morung’ and ‘community home’. Every village has a separate community home, which is kind of a dormitory, where every capable and healthy male member gathers every night and sleeps in rotation’ (Yimchunger, 2000, p.14). This was necessary as a precautionary measure to prepare for any eventuality, such as a sudden enemy attack, a natural calamity, or any other emergency law and order issue that could arise in the village. Women never slept in the community dwelling. The community houses served as dormitories for menfolk. Here, the male members shared ideas and suggestions. It kept them united, and they developed a sense of oneness. ‘Log drums carved out of a single big log used to be kept within the communal house. The sentries were designed to rotate to sound/beat the drums promptly. There are different rhythms on the log drums, each signifying a distinct meaning. The beats indicate and inform people about the time. It also passed messages from one village to another. It warned people of dangers from approaching enemies, etc. People also performed rituals before carving out log drums and putting them in the community house’ (Yimchunger, 2000, p. 15).

Besides, the community houses are a fine example of a central place where menfolk create a variety of handicraft items while on duty or in their leisure time. ‘The Yimkhiung menfolk also practised blacksmithing, but it was confined to a specific clan or family. The secret of

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<sup>6</sup> ‘*Khiungpuh*’ is a yimkhiung dialect which means priest who performed sacrifices and taking care of the morung.

the trade was not shared with other people, and everyone can be a blacksmith. The blacksmith manufactured dao/machetes, spears, spades, and digging tools. However, people needed the technical knowledge to achieve the perfection that modern machines produce. Most of the Yimkhiung menfolk are experts in making handicraft items' (Lakiumong, 2000, pp. 15-17).

### **Belief System:**

Dreams greatly influence Yimkhiung people in their lives. They believe that dreams show them what is to come, warning us of dangers that are likely to occur. Another superstition that people commonly believe in is forecasting good luck or ill luck before to the start of their mission or journey by using some objects. Some people are believed to practice sorcery and witchcraft to settle scores with enemies or for payment from other people (customers). However, it is forbidden to engage in evil practice is prohibited. Hence, anyone found practising these acts was to be excommunicated, and the whole family was terminated.

'Another belief is that people have an animal soul, but they have often heard about deer, tiger, and snake souls. People fear and avoid those who possess such souls because some are not on good terms with them, as it is considered harmful. In the event that the deer or the snake is killed, the person possessing such souls has also died. For this reason, many hunters during that time never shot and killed particular animals without permission and confirmation. However, the soul of the tiger or the snake is believed to guard and protect family members or the entire village from enemies, dangers, wild animals, etc.' (yimkhiungrutruk, 2017, para.27)

The following are some of the traditional beliefs and omens of the Yimkhiung people:

- *'Ancestors believed that undertaking a journey or any expedition the next day after a festival was considered auspicious.*
- *Receiving raw meat from an enemy is auspicious; however, one should not eat it or return it to the sender; otherwise, it may cause bad luck or ill health. It should be thrown away.*
- *It is inauspicious to see snakes in copulation.*

- *Snakes entering homes and hearths bring bad luck or ill health. Such things are still believed.*
- *Crowing of cocks at untimely hours or before midnight is regarded as inauspicious.*
- *Plants and woods that are hit/struck by lightning should not be touched or burned; it may cause ill health or bad luck.*
- *Whenever a tiger or a leopard is killed, the flesh or chopped meat should not be brought into the village. After that, those who had eaten the flesh of such animals were even allowed to enter the village for three days. Breaking the rules brings ill health and bad luck to the village.*
- *They are also believed to escort the souls of the sick. It is inauspicious to keep any leftovers.*
- *After a visit to a funeral service/place on return, a person should not eat Meat offered in honour of the dead is supposed to be consumed totally. 'The people also believed that evil (Satan/Devil), they called 'Arimbe'. They believed that evil spirits existed and lived in dark places, such as forests, rivers, mountains, and deserted and lonely areas. The male evil spirits were called 'Aryimpuh,' and the female spirits were called 'Aryimbe' (Lakiumong, 2000l, p.34). The people regarded evil spirits as responsible for all diseases, curses, accidents, misfortunes, and other calamities. Hence, the people followed animistic rituals to appease and stay protected from evil spirits. The people also believed in omens and superstitious dreams. In their forefathers' time, people used to trust in the soul. 'They frequently required the services of 'Thurumu' (Local quacks), who believed in possessing supernatural powers to communicate with the unseen spirits of dead people and cure all sicknesses and diseases. They entered the house without washing their hands and feet (Lakiumong, 2000, p.34). t. It is inauspicious if one does not follow the rules.*
- It is considered a bad omen if wild animals enter a village or a house.
- It is considered inauspicious when a snake, a dog bites, and lightning hits an individual.
- 'The dead bodies of those who die because of drowning are not permitted to be taken into the village. They must be buried immediately in the cemetery. It is inauspicious if this is not followed' (yimkhiungrutruk, para.27).

- Keeping lucky stones, tails, nails, teeth, skin, and feathers is believed to bring good luck.
- It is believed that death is imminent for some people when a soul bird (*Khyeanthürak*) sounds.
- Insect bites and stings on human genitals are considered inauspicious.
- Lying over a snake or a snake crawling over humans while asleep is considered inauspicious.
- Rainbows seen near swelling houses are considered inauspicious.
- Ghosts or spirits of a person supposed to have been seen are considered inauspicious.
- It is considered bad luck if a snake, cat, or cow crosses your path while on a hunting or fishing trip.
- It is considered inauspicious to wear an unpatterned shawl. Warriors and menfolk should not wear such shawls.
- The male folk are not supposed to touch weaving material before undertaking hunting or fishing expeditions to avoid ill luck. The menfolk are advised to avoid sexual intercourse with women the night before one undertakes a hunting, fishing or headhunting trip. It is supposed to bring ill luck if this is not followed.
- Victory is in the offing when wearing a warrior's shawl in dreams

### **Festival of Yimkhiung Naga Tribe:**

*Fig 2.8 Yimkhiung womenfolk dancing at the Metumnyo festival.*



Source: <https://nagalandpost.com/index.php/2023/08/09/yimkhiungs-celebrate-metumnyo-festival/>

The Yimkhiung observe and celebrate many festivals throughout the year. Each festival connotes a significance. Some of the important festivals are as follows.

***Metumnyio***:<sup>7</sup> It is one of the most important and popular festivals observed by the Yimkhiung Naga. It is the traditional five-day harvest festival, regarded as a solemn occasion. This auspicious festival is celebrated with enthusiasm in every corner of the Yimkhiung Nagas of Nagaland. The '*Metumnyo*' festival lasts for five days. This harvest festival is of great importance to the Yimkhiung tribe and is one of many famous festivals of Nagaland. The '*Metumnyo*' festival is of great significance, and many believe it is celebrated for new crops and harvested grain of the year or millet feast (Yimkhiungrutruk, 2017, Para.11). The following is the chain of *meitumnyo* celebrations and their significance:

***Kiuzhikhi*** (Announcement): The festivities start in the first week of August (Langzu). 'It is believed that if the '*Kiulung-zhyyibuh*' (announcer) fails to announce the celebration at the proper time, which means ahead of four days, then a calamity may occur, or that children born in the same year may be dull and dumb' (Yimkhunger, 2000, p. 73).

***Jimso Tsuhphitkhi***<sup>8</sup> (Eating of new rice). This festival marks the newly harvested grain, specifically the millets. Millet is a staple in the diet of the Yimkhiung. During this festival, rituals are performed to pray for a good harvest. Cooked rice is placed carefully in a basket along with an axe, dao and spade, and spilt wine is placed on the ground beside the hearth, signifying the offering of food and drink first. After this, some of the ashes are removed from the hearth as a sign of welcoming the newly harvested rice (Lakiumong, 2000, p.75).

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<sup>7</sup> *Meitumnyo*, the word *Mei* which means soul, *Tum* means 'ritual respect' and *Nyo* means 'festival'.

<sup>8</sup> The word *Jimso* in yimkhiung dialect new rice and *Tsuhphitkhi* means eating.

***Khungaru Metumkhi:*** This festival also signifies the souls of new babies born before the ‘*Meitumnyo*’ festival. According to their forefathers' beliefs, to respect the new soul, some rituals are performed by offering pieces of meat to a priest for rites.<sup>9</sup> Six pieces of meat are offered if it is a baby boy, indicating that male children have six spirits, and five pieces of meat are offered if it is a girl, based on the rituals that girl children have five souls. After the religious rite, that meat is given away to some older people of their locality (Yimkhunger, 2000, pp. 73-74).

***Yamkhun Thsukhi*** (Marriage): During the *meitumnyo*, young men and women exchange gifts as a sign of betrothal. Traditionally, men give necklaces or bangles to women, known as ‘*Mukdakaak*’. It is a day when marriage can be fixed.<sup>10</sup> The *Meitumnyo* celebration lasts for five days, during which all traditional ties are renewed and new relationships are built in solidarity with their tribe. It is on the occasion of this festival that the deceased loving souls who have passed away the year before return to their homes. The people pray for the deceased souls and also for a good harvest. The holidays of this festival are spent with pomp and a cheerful attitude. People dine, dance and rejoice together as a community. The festival also marks a meaningful revival of what has been lost or broken by raging rains and storms. Hence, people clean and repair roads, homes, and surroundings to restore a sense of order. On such occasions, complete rest and refrain from any physical labour. People resume their regular duties and usual work only after the festival.

***Tsungkamnyio:***<sup>11</sup> This is the biggest festival in Yimkhiung. The festival falls in January, during the winter season. This festival is associated with the accomplishment of agricultural work and post-harvest after collecting food crops, and they rest for some months (Yimchunger, 2000, P. 77). They offer thanks to God for a bountiful harvest, the blessing of livestock and helping the crops to grow well. This festival involved a lot of feasting, singing

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<sup>9</sup> <https://yimkhiungrutruk.org/festivals/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://yimkhiungrutruk.org/festivals/>

<sup>11</sup> *Tsungkamnyio*, the word in yimkhiung dialect ‘*Tsungkam* which means winter, as it is observed during winter months, i.e., January and ‘*Nyio* mean to celebrate’.

and dancing, inviting relatives and friends, and treating them to good drinks and meat. It is a time when friendship, unity and relationships were honoured, and reconciliation and peace treaties were made between warring individuals and groups through this festival.

**Wunthsunyo:**<sup>12</sup> This is a post-harvest celebration every April. It is associated with building a hut after trees and bushes are burned down. In the past, pre-activities in agriculture involved helping one another build their respective huts while also enjoying themselves together by eating and sharing food.

All Yimkhiung festivals demonstrate a deep respect for agriculture and the harvest it produces. Hence, they express their sincere gratitude towards God, who has aided them on their long and arduous journey. *'Metümnyio and Tsungkamnyio'* is the traditional festival of the Yimkhiung tribe. People host grand celebrations and come together to dance, feast, and rejoice as a community. The festival also has a meaningful revival of what is lost or broken. As per the knowledge shared by the respondent, *"This is the time people greet each other with a pleasant attitude, even to their enemies. People clean their houses and surroundings, creating a sense of restoration. When the two groups share meat, it is a sign of the end of the enmity. So this festival also represents reconciliation"*.<sup>13</sup>

The Government of Nagaland has provided the proper tools and venues for the Yimkhiungs to showcase their traditions, culture, and crafts to tourists. Over the last decade, a surge in tourism in the region has spurred efforts to preserve the culture of the relevant tribes. The Yimkhiungs have been at the forefront of preserving culture and tradition, and it is this cultural diversity that makes Nagaland the most enchanting state due to its dedicated festivals and rich culture, aided in part by the Naga State. The Yimkhiung is one of the main

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<sup>12</sup> *Wuntsung nyo*, *wun* means a hut, *'Thsu* means to construct and *'Nyio* means to celebrate.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Asangla aged 31, female, Yimkhiung, farmer, Shamator .

contributors to the Hornbill Festival in the Nagaland State of India; the Hornbill Festival plays a leading role in preserving traditional culture and also showcases culture and customs from the different tribes of the Naga region, as well as from another ethnic northeast part of India. Highlights of the festival include community bonding, music, songs, and tribal dances across the many ethnic groups of the Nagaland, spin top demonstrations by the Yimkhiung Naga tribe, and folk songs and dance.

### **Economy:**

**Agriculture:** The Yimkhiung people predominantly practice the jhum system of cultivation. Terrace cultivation was not practised till recently. Slash-and-burn agriculture methods are known as jhum cultivation (*Mulu*). Many yimkhiung villagers still practice this jhum cultivation in agriculture, as it is an old farming practice. However, it is one of the easiest and most convenient ways to cultivate crops in mountain regions. In Jhum cultivation, the longer the jhum cycle, the better it is for the used jhum field to recover its fertility. Jhum cultivation is the traditional chief form of agriculture practised in the Yimkhiung village, which involves customary laws that regulate cultivation. Shamator is highly known for trading in commodities of seasonal crops such as Kolar (kidney peas), potatoes, Cabbage, Tanamar apple, Yam and Corn. Supplies within the state are like Tuensang, Mokokchung, Kohima, and Dimapur. Kidney beans (kholar) of Shamator are considered the best kidney beans found only in the Shamator area and are in great demand in Nagaland.

Paddy is the main crop in the jhum, followed by millet and other vegetables: chilli, green leaves, ginger, cabbage, Soybeans, and kidney beans. Now, farmers are moving towards plantations with crops like Ginseng. The wonder plant is also found in the Saramati belt and on the high hills in some Yimkhiung-inhabited areas. Two great rivers flow through the centre of the Yimkhiung land. The Züngki and the Yai River. However, neither river has served any purpose due to its deep flow, making it impossible to navigate for agricultural purposes. However, two hydropower projects have come up recently, which could be incredibly beneficial in the coming days. The Likimro Hydel Project is in the Pungro area,

and the Hührongke Project is in the Shamator area. The Saramati, the highest mountain in the state, is in the Pungro area of the Yimkhiung land. Moreover, the Pungro area boasts minerals like coal, limestone, nickel, chromium, steel, and iron ore in the Bukphur and Mimi belts.

- **Animal rearing:** Animal rearing is another primary livelihood option practised by Yimkhiung, and almost every household in the village rears pigs, rabbits, cows, and poultry. In the Yimkhiung Naga tradition, Mithun symbolises wealth and status. It is a sacred animal considered a rich man's animal, and his wealth is measured by the number of Mithun he possesses. In the past, Mithun was brought for the feast during the establishment of the proposed village.

#### **Political organisation:**

The Yimkhiung tribe has its own unique identity and political aspirations. The Yimkhiung political organisation mainly focused on autonomy and social interest while addressing its unique needs and challenges. Here are some factors associated with the political organisation of the Yimkhiung tribe:

#### **Traditional Governance System:**

The Yimkhiung society has been governed by tradition and customary law, which is still valid. In ancient times, each village had a distinct administrative entity not subject to any other authority, and each village had a sovereign entity under the governance of the 'Kiulongthuru', meaning the village founder, who would be regarded as the headman by the villagers (Das, 2014, pp. 39-40).

**Rule of selection:** 'Kiulongthuru' is solely responsible for dispensing justice to the citizens and settling the disputes in the village. The traditional governing body of the Yimkhiung tribe at the village level is known as 'Kiulongthuru'. 'It is typically comprised of elders, known for their wisdom, experience and knowledge of customary laws. They hold office

either by heredity, which is for a lifetime, or by selection based on merits, wisdom, and leadership qualities (Yimchunger, 2000, p. 22). Elders play a decisive role in governance, advising and mediating inter-village disputes and conflicts. Their authority is derived from their experience, knowledge, and understanding of traditional customs (D'Souza, 2011, p. 95).

***Duties and responsibilities:*** The village chief holds the power and authority in village affairs and decision-making, handling all social, political, economic, and legal matters. The council's responsibilities include settling disputes, enforcing customary laws, and organising village activities and communal work. They were responsible for implementing its decisions. The clan elders settle all disputes; if their decision is unsatisfactory, it can be referred to the village court. The village court handles cases like murder, divorce, and adultery. Although there is no written rule on customary laws, they relied on the village headman's oral knowledge and wisdom to find solutions and reconcile (Yimchunger, 2000, pp.23-25). Every role and reconciliation process is different for the chosen person as a mediator. Village chiefs serve as local leaders who mediate between the government and the community. The role of '*Limpuru*'<sup>14</sup> is that of the mediator who deals with village matters between the villages. While the role of the '*Mahtsahru*'<sup>15</sup> is within the village, both the mediators are responsible for bringing peace and justice between the individuals and all respect them within the village and as part of personal responsibility (Sebastian, 2015, pp. 185-186). Elders and village leaders lead traditional diplomacy because they are wise and impartial, and they play a significant role in maintaining peace and cooperation among yimkhiung villages.

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<sup>14</sup> '*Limpuru*' is a mediate for peace who deals with village matters between the villages.

<sup>15</sup> '*Mahtsahru*' is a mediator who played an important role in reconciliation process and bring justice between individuals

### **Modern Governance System:**

The Nagaland government recognised the autonomy of tribal customary laws. Modern state law applies more to criminal cases and electoral politics. 'The introduction of statehood in 1963 resulted in new governance in Nagaland, India. The modern institutions were introduced, which significantly strengthening local governance' (Anar, 2011, p.37). However, modern local governance has tried not to disturb the age-old system of governance. Still, gradually, new changes have been brought in their structure, and the role of village chiefs is considerably declining, though they continue to exist to date. Still, they do not enjoy the power they had in the past due to the advent of modern institutions (Anar, 2011, p.50). The modern governing system in the Yimkhiung community can be understood through two categories, that is, village level and community level, as follows:

#### **The Village Level**

**Gaonburas:** Gaonburas emerged during the colonial era, when the British appointed the eldest and most knowledgeable person in the village. The British administration introduced the Gaongbura and Dobashi institutions on the Naga Hills, and this introduction was intended to serve as an interpreter between the British government and the villages (Temjensosang, 2017, p. 209). Communities have at least one Gaonbura in every town and village. The Yimkhkung Naga village is a politically well-organised one. Gaonburas holds this position through hereditary leadership, and he has been ruling the village since its formation with great power and authority (Yimchunger, 2000, p.22). Gaonbura's duties encompass maintaining the population and law enforcement. He also acts as the channel for peace decisions amongst the tribes and citizens. The role of Gaonbura is to be the custodian of Naga customary laws, traditions, and practices. Gaonbura is appointed by the government to handle any law and order situation regarding customs, thereby enabling the smooth administration of the district.

**The Village Council:** Every Yimkhiung village has a village council. The village council is the primary governing body of the village. It consists of Gaonburas and their respective agents, which are highly regarded in the village (Yimchunger, 2000, p. 23). The functions of

the village council are to administer and deal with the internal matters of the village; they have full power to formulate village development work. Qualification for members of the village council: a person needs to attain the age of 25 years and be a citizen of India, and every council shall serve for five years from the date of appointment (Anar, 2011, pp.50-53)

### **Power and duties of the village council**

- Formulate village development schemes to supervise the maintenance of water supply, roads, electricity, forests, schools, and other welfare activities.
- To take development works on its own initiative or at the government's request.
- To apply for and receive grain in aid donations, subsidies from the government or any agencies.
- To borrow money from the government to apply for the village's development work.

### **Community Level**

**Yimkhiung Tribal Council (YTC):** It is the apex body representing the political and social interests of the Yimkhiung tribe. Its headquarters are in the Shamator district. It was established on January 1, 1948, at Huker village. The Yimkhiung tribal council organisation is considered the highest governing organ of the Yimkhiung community. This Tribal body is empowered to make crucial decisions about the community's future and to deal with matters related to the tribes internal governance, disputes, issues and preserved customs and traditions of Yimkhiung. The tribal council serves as the primary decision-maker on all significant issues related to the tribe's development, as well as its relationships with other Naga tribes and the government.<sup>16</sup> YTC members hold a powerful position in influencing politics as permanent staff, through their ability to control information, propose policy, and share knowledge concerning feasibility.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://yimkhiungrutruk.org/organizations/ytcl/>

### **Duties and Powers of Yimkhiung Tribal Council:**

- They served to act as a neutral and impartial agent in resolving conflict, guided in this action by a set of principles guaranteeing equal and impartial treatment.
- They directly deal with any matters and take part in the decision-making process, and implement it in the Yimkhiung community
- They are to resolve any form of hostilities and confrontation of the Yimkhiung community.
- YTC is an NGO organisation whose duties are to protect and preserve the culture and promote the Yimkhiung community in all its aspects.

### **ETHNOGRAPHY PROFILE OF TIKHIR NAGAS**

The Tikhir Nagas are one of the indigenous Nagas tribes living in the hills of eastern Nagaland. According to the 2011 Census, their population is 7,537, and their inhabited areas are the districts of Shamator and Kiphire; however, the Tikhir-dominant region is Kiusam. Tikhir relies on traditional farming practices for its livelihood; it is predominantly an agricultural community. In addition, they are remarkably skilled in various crafts, such as handicrafts, weaving, blacksmithing, and pottery, which the Tikhir community practises and signifies their cultural identity. The delay in the arrival of Christianity and the spread of evangelism in Tikhir led to prolonged head-hunting practices, unlike other Naga tribes that had adopted Christianity earlier, which transformed their ways of life significantly ahead of their time. The Tikhir were accorded official recognition as one of the Naga tribes by the government of Nagaland only on 20th January 2022 (2022, pp. 17-18).

#### **Origin and settlement of the Tikhir Naga Tribe:**

The Tikhir are a Naga tribe from Nagaland, India. The word “*Tikhir*” means “Dew People”, meaning they were the first settlers of the place as they brushed up the dewdrops.<sup>17</sup> Tikhir is a compound of two words derived from the Tikhir dialect: “*Tukhia*”, meaning “Dew”, and

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<sup>17</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tikhir\\_Naga#Population](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tikhir_Naga#Population)

“*Liu*”, a suffix that connotes people. <sup>18</sup> In the remote past, when a group of people, after a year of migration from a southern East Asian country via China and Myanmar, entered the present Nagaland state and first settled at a particular place, “Taimuphu”, they observed that dew enveloped the surroundings of this entire settlement. They also had to wade through these dew-covered plants and trees from time to time to attend to their daily needs, and over time, these people were called ‘*Tukhialiu*’, meaning “dew people”. The Tikhir Naga, like other Naga tribes, migrated from various places in Southeast Asian countries. Tikhir territory is contiguous and stretches from north to south in the eastern part of the Indian state of Nagaland (Zamen, 2018, para 2).

**Fig. 2.9: Taimephu Bridge:**



Source: Fieldwork

Although it is not possible to determine the exact date of migration and settlement of the Tikhir Naga tribes, there is sufficient historical evidence to prove that they had a habitat or territory even before the Christian era. Tikhir is known as the earliest indigenous inhabitants, and ‘Taimephu’ is the first settlement place of the Tikhir Naga. ‘Taimephu’, which means ‘bridge over river,’ was named after the Tikhir ancestors, who were believed to have built a bridge over the river to reach out to the other side to fetch pure flowing water. From this particular place, Tikhirs moved on to establish new villages, namely ‘Tükhiakupong’ and

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<sup>18</sup> <https://morungexpress.com/origin-of-the-tikhir-tribe#:~:text=After%20crossing%20Myanmar%20through%20the,South%2DWest%20of%20Waphur%20village>

‘Powong’ (999 households, located below Sekiur Village). Then they spread out to the rest of the Tikhir habitats of the present day.

**Figure 2.10: Zungki River and Yayerive**



Source: Fieldwork

Taimephu, situated on a hillock at the confluence of the Thurak (Zungki) and Yaye rivers, is approximately 5 km away from Wapher village in the Shamator district, which flows towards the Kiphire district. The Shamator “Tikhir” tribe first settled at this place around the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>19</sup> However, over time, as the British made inroads into the then Naga Hills and the survey of the unadministered area was conducted, Tukhialiu was altered to Tikhiru by the Sangtams, Chillihie by the Khamniungans, Taikhuphu by the Chakhesangs, Tukheru by the Yimkhiungs, etc. The terms Tikhir and Tukhialiu are synonymous, whereby Tukhialiu implies the original root of the term Tikhir. As a tribe, Tukhialiu has existed since time immemorial, continuing until the early 19th century, when the British altered the Name to Tikhir. This change in nomenclature occurred because the Britishers were found to spell words according to their accent and pronounce the word “Tukhialiu”. Therefore, they simplified and coined the term Tikhir. Since then, it has been used as the official name of the tribes in all areas of records and references (Yutsu, 2005, pp. 3-5). The history of the Naga, especially the ancient past, is shrouded in mystery. However, from every available source, it

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<sup>19</sup> <https://morungexpress.com/students-visit-first-settlement-place-tikhir-naga>

is inferable that the Nagas migrated from different places of Southeast Asian countries at one point in time or another for the simple reason that Nagas share a common cultural and physical affinity with migrated since the earliest times from the southeast Asian countries, is categories in the second group crossing Tunai (Chindwin) river, finally entered the western side of the present Nagaland through the Patkai range. This second migrating wave/group is considered to belong to the tribes, e.g Ao. Chang, Khamniungan. Makhor, Pochury and Tikhir. After crossing Myanmar through the Patkai range, the Tikhir first settled at “*Taimephu*”, meaning “The hanging bridge”. This place is situated between the dual rivers of Zingki and Yayi, under the Shamator sub-division, approximately 5 km from the historical site at Tongkhin. Legend says Tikhir originated /walked out of this stone cave at Tongkhin. Nevertheless, the remnants and finds of material culture, such as pottery, beads, and ornaments, at Tongkhin justify the presence of a remote post-Tikhirs settlement in this place. This place is located on a hillock 1 km south of Anatonger village, under the Kiphire district.

At Taimephu, there was a rapid and enormous increase in population, which led to a sizable group leaving this place to establish another village nearby, called Tukhiakupong, which means "village of the dew." Again, another group from this same village established a village called Powong, having 990 households, below the present sukiur village, so it also went on for centuries and as a result, a good number of villages presently under Shamator and Thonoknyu sprouted, tracing their pedigree to Taimephu. At Tongkhin, many groups, in waves, left this place at one point or another and began to establish new villages in the far south of Tongkhin. Since Tongkhin offers a vivid, picturesque visual profile of a vast area to the west, east, and south, it is believed that a group selected some particular location and established villages from there. This place was used as a viewing point for selecting a location to establish a new village. Many villages were established over time, and presently, most villages under the Kiusam and Pungro areas trace their origins to Tongkhin (Yuktsu, 2005, pp. 3-4).

During the process of expansion and settlement of new villages many centuries ago, trade was established between neighbouring villages, especially Yimkhiung and Khamniungan,

and friendships between individuals were formed. Due to this friendship, many Yimkhiung and Khiamniungans came to live in Tikhir village for various reasons, such as disputes or poverty in their native villages, which resulted from intermarrying. Likewise, many Tikhir tribes joined that society of their own free will. A mixture of the Tikhir, Chirrs and Makory inhabits the villages under the Pungro area. The ancestral domain of the Tikhir area is contiguous, stretching from Shamator-Leangkong in the north to Saramati Peak in the southeast sector. It is bordered by Myanmar in the east, Yimkhiung in the north, Khiamniungan in the northeast, Sangtams in the west, and the Pochury in the south (Yuktsu, 2005, pp. 4-5).

As Yutsu (2005, pp. 15-15) noted, the following are the names of various migration points/places where the Tikhir settled and established new villages from south to west.

- Taimephu is the first settlement place of Tikhir, which means a bridge over the river in Tikhir dialect)
- Tongkhin (meaning ‘second migration location of the Tikhir tribe’)
- Sangjangkiu (which means ‘a village of thick groves of trees’)
- Kiusikiu (meaning ‘new village’ in Tikhir dialect)

**Demography:** According to the 2011 Census report, the Tihir comprise a population of 7537. The Tikhir tribe inhabits the eastern part of Nagaland, primarily in the Shamator and Kiphire districts (Belho, 2022, p. 17). The Tikhir tribe has 42 villages within its jurisdiction and five government administration units, with a population of around 52,000 (Zaman, 2018, para. 3). Some censuses are not included, as individuals who had joined other tribes, such as Yimkhiung, Khiamniungan, and Sangtam, some centuries ago, are not accounted for. Tikhir are also found in towns like Dimapur, Kohima, Mokokchung, Mon, Zunheboto, and Wokha.

### **Rituals:**

‘*Midmong*’ is a traditional religious practice observed by the Tikhir. It is a seed-sowing ritual performed after sowing seeds to seek forgiveness, ward off a poor harvest resulting from land and plant destruction, and protect the soil. Midmong is an act of worship during the

preparation of the fields. Villagers spend time in prayer and fasting for an abundant blessing (Tikhir, NA, pp.1-2).

The seed-sowing ritual is performed by an indigenous priest known as ‘*Thongpo*’, the priest of the new field, and ‘*Murokpo*’, the priest of the old field. This priest performed seed-sowing rituals for the whole community. It is believed that the harvest depends on the rituals; if the required rituals and worship are not performed, a poor harvest may result. Therefore, proper care is observed during the seed-sowing rituals. This ritual has no fixed time; it can be performed according to the convenience of the owner and the priest (Ibid, pp. 3-6).

### Traditional attire and jewellery

**Figure. 2.11: Tikhir womenfolk in Nyahyiu attire**



**Figure 2.12: Tikhir women in shell Mekhala and glass bead ornaments**



Source- Fieldwork

The Tikhir tribe shawl is the most essential part of the attire, woven with cotton and staple fibre. Wool is also used. Embroidery was once added to shawls using the support of porcupine quills. In time, needles were unavailable, but the weaving of shawls and mekhala was practised less among the Tikhir tribes. Colour combinations and designs have social significance and symbolic meaning. Women’s traditional attire, *Nyahyiu*,<sup>20</sup> is said to be one

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<sup>20</sup> ‘*Nyahyiu*’ is a Tikhir traditional women attire which one of the oldest weaving.

of the oldest weaving and the first attire used by the Tikhir Tribe, which wraps around the waist tightly to the leg. Plant extracts, including indigo, were used to dye cloth. There are lots of varieties of shawls and mekkelas worn by Tikhir women. The weaving methods have evolved into various styles, including machine-made ones.

Mostly, the colours are black and white in almost all the attire. Earlier, men were allowed to wear specific patterns only after establishing a record of feats and achievements. The Tikhir tribe's traditional dresses have played a vital role in identity and helped to preserve their origin and culture. Even today, some designed shawls are used by affluent segments within the tribes. Jewellery, too, is a distinguishing factor. Hence, both women and men wear ornaments from head to toe. Menfolk wear earrings made of ivory, arm bracelets, wrist bracelets made of ivory, and super fine-quality cane. They use various materials for jewellery, such as bronze, brass, shells, boar, agate and glass beads. Menfolk were fond of tattooing on the face, chest and arms. Menfolk wore suitable varieties of necklaces made up of delicate beads of precious stones and varieties of ivory shells attached with tiger teeth. Women's tattooing was confined to the chin, arms and legs. Red dye hairs would be attached to the spear for a better grip. Before men, folk used sashes on the upper half of the body, a loincloth called '*Langdam*', which is woven from cotton threads. During special ceremonial dances, men attached a spherical disc of brass and steel to the front portion of the sash. It produced a jingling sound, which gave a tune to their singing while dancing.

**Religion:** Christianity arrived in the Tikhir community as late as the 1950s through the Yimkhiung and Ao Naga mission (Zaman, 2018, para. 4). Currently, all Tikhir churches are affiliated with Tikhir Baptist Piti Atukhianti (TBPA). Christianity led to the discouragement of superstitious ideas and headhunting. Education and Christianity have provided the Nagas with a new sense of identity and a gradual change in outlook. It helped build a sense of belonging among the tribes and a proper relationship with the new societal advancement.

## Festivals of the Tikhir Naga Tribe:

Figure 2.13: Tikhir folk dancing during the Tsonglaknyi festival



<https://www.dreamstime.com/tikhir-naga-tribe-beautiful-traditional-attire-nagaland-image2543>

‘*Tsonglaknyi*’, the main Tikhir festival, is annually observed from October 9 to 12. ‘*Tsonglaknyi*’ comprises three words: ‘*Tsong*’ means Shield, and ‘*lak*’ means sanctification. Moreover, ‘*Nyi*’ means festival, ‘*Tsonglaknyi*’, a festival of the sanctification of the Shield. The festival represents the sanctification of the weapons and their wealth and valuable assets, as well as the purification of the men’s folk before going out for headhunting. This festival is a purification and one of the most important among the Tikhir festivals celebrated, which continues to be celebrated for four days’ (Ibid, para.5).

Day One: ‘The village headman announces the celebration information to the public three days in advance every year. Once it is made known, everyone, young and old, comes together in the morning, narrating tales of their adventure and heroic activities, singing folk songs, dancing and merry-making. The knowledge and love of one’s culture, patriotism, and responsibility are inculcated in one and all, especially in the young hearts. Morung was an institution of learning in the earlier days’.

Day Two: ‘The Morung is always occupied throughout the festival. The activities at the Morung continue, including narrating tales of adventure and heroism, singing folk songs, dancing, and merry-making. Each Khel (cluster of houses under one Morung) of the village visits each other, dedicating folk songs and dances to each other. Everyone joins in the

celebration of the successful accomplishments throughout the year. The male folk spearhead the festival’.

Day Three: ‘In the evening, when the dances and visiting chefs are completed, once again, everyone gathers at the Morung. Around five or seven warriors, dressed in complete Traditional attire, are chosen to make Bamboo cups. The making of the cups has its unique significance. As a tradition, they must make the cups with the best bamboo. They climb up the bamboo and pull it down from the topmost lip. If it breaks, they go for the other one because they consider it a bad sign. Three people cut out the cups in a single stroke, each with their dao. After cutting, the mark is scrutinised. If (here is a clean cut) it is taken as a positive sign, they believe they will be victorious and prosperous in the coming year. From these three cups, they bring water from the source of a rivulet (cleaned and marked earlier) and keep them securely tied to the post of the Morung to be used on the fourth morning’.

Day four: ‘In the early morning, all the menfolk gather weapons at the Morung, notably war shields, spears, darts, bows, and arrows. They line them in a row to be sanctified by the village priest (the oldest man). ‘For this sanctification, the best and largest cock is brought, taken from a well-to-do family (in all aspects). The priest/oldest man kills it, observing and studying the signs as it dies. It is considered a bad sign if the cock dies with its left leg placed over the right leg or the left leg making the last move. Conversely, if the right leg covers the left or the right leg makes the previous move, it is considered a positive sign. When it shows a positive sign, he tells the villagers to give their best, hoping they will be victorious and prosperous throughout the coming year’ (Ibid, para.6)

‘The cock’s intestine and heart are removed and placed on an arrow, which is pierced on a particular tree where they usually hang the rival’s head. While doing this, the priest chants to let their rival spirits come and eat it. Then comes the sanctification of the weapons. The remaining internal organs are crushed into pieces and mixed with rice beer and ginger. The priest chants and throws these on the weapons lined up before him. If any of the pieces get stuck on any of the weapons (a particular part), it is assumed that the very owner will bring

a rival's head or hunt an animal soon. The blood of the cock is collected in a cone-shaped banana leaf' (Ibid).

All the male members are made to dip their right fingers in the blood to make them bold and courageous while facing the enemy. The water was brought from the bamboo cups, and then the dipped finger was. This is done so that they may not fall prey to evil. The cock is cooked and the pieces are distributed to all men folk but this is need not for eating. Upon receiving it again, the person breaks it into smaller pieces and throws it behind their seat. This is to let the enemy's spirit come and consume it, making it their victim.

After all the rituals held at the Morung are completed, the priest gives out a victory call, which is answered by the victory shout of the menfolk. This victory shout signifies their achievement throughout the year and their preparedness for the coming year. All the men folk then disperse to their respective homes, kill a cock, and sanctify their wealth and valuable assets by sprinkling the blood along with the internal organs. They cooked the cock and eaten along with their friends. The females are restricted from eating this particular chicken. Special meat is arranged for them, which they eat after the men have eaten the chicken.

'Apart from its unique ritualistic art, the festival is also a time when a great feast is laid out for all. It is a time when young and old, poor and rich, all gather in celebration. The wealthy and well-to-do families invite the poor for lunch and give them gifts, making merry together. Prospective marriageable couples are announced during this time. It is believed that the soul of the dead lives on with the family; this festival marks the final departure of the dead from the living. It is also a time for reconciliation and reflection, as well as renewal. The elders are given due respect. The festival is celebrated with great fanfare, inviting friends from diverse walks of life as well. Large slices of pork are distributed to friends and well-wishers, especially people from different tribes. The festival is celebrated in the best way possible, a moment that will be remembered for a long time. With the festival now complete, the people

are again back to their respective activities, better prepared and with renewed spirits to achieve more significant goals in the coming seasons.<sup>21</sup>

## **Economy**

**Agriculture:** Land is the most essential asset in the Tikhir community. Slash-and-burn agriculture methods are known as ‘*Mulu*<sup>22</sup>’. Many Tikhir villagers still practice jhum cultivation in agriculture as it is an old traditional practice. However, it is one of the easiest and most convenient methods for cultivating crops in mountain regions. In Jhum cultivation, the longer the jhum cycle, the better it is for the used jhum field to recover its fertility. Jhum cultivation is the traditional chief form of agriculture practised in the Tikhir village, which involves customary laws that regulate the practice of its cultivation. ‘*Thulo*’<sup>23</sup> is the main crop in the jhum, followed by millet and other vegetables: chilli, green leaves, ginger, kidney beans, and Soybeans. Now, farmers are transitioning to plantations that grow a variety of crops.

**Animal rearing:** Animal rearing is another primary livelihood option for the Tikhir Naga. Almost every household in the village rears pigs, chickens, and rabbits, and some also rear cows. However, poultry is divided into two types: local hens and broiler chickens. Most in the village keep only local hens, as feeding them is minimal and requires fewer expenses, and they can also be sold at a higher price due to demand.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://thohepou.wordpress.com/2012/10/09/tsonglaknyi-festival-of-tikhir-naga/>

<sup>22</sup> ‘*Mulu*’ is tikhir dialect which means jhuming cultivation

<sup>23</sup> ‘*Thulo*’ meaning paddy in tikhir dialect

## **Political Organisation:**

### **The village administration:**

The village council resolves disputes of various kinds. In private disputes, only two persons can be involved in discussion and decision-making, but the whole village is involved in public disputes. The village council is responsible for resolving disputes and implementing decisions.

**Tikhir Tribal Council (TTC):** It was formed in 1983 as a common platform and the apex body to govern and protect the common interests of the Tikhir community. But today it is spearheaded by the Hoho, Tikhir Students Union (TSU) and Tikhir Baptist Piti Atukhianti (TBPA) (Zaman, 2018, Para. 6). The first Tikhir organisation was formed in 1965 with the name Tikhir Public movement to protect and promote the common interest of the Tikhir community; however, the nomenclature was changed to Tikhir Tribal Council (TTC). Its role is to look into matters related to Tikhir's interest and preserve their culture.

### **Demographic profile of the respondents**

This section describes the demographic profile of the study respondents, including indicators such as community, age, sex, education, occupation, and residence.

**Table 2.1: Respondents of the Community**

<b>Community</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yimkhiung	61	46
Tikhir	72	54
<b>Total no</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

As indicated by Table 2.1, 54 per cent of the respondents were Tikhir, and 46 per cent were Yimkhiung.

**Table 2.2: Gender Profile of Respondents**

Gender	Community		No of respondents	Percentage (%)
	Yimkhiung	Tikhir		
Female	12	26	38	29
Male	49	46	95	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: field work

Table 2.2 explains the Gender profile of the respondents in the study. In this study, 71% of respondents are male, while 29% are female. The high percentage of male respondents in this study is attributed to multiple reasons. The women in their communities are usually less actively involved in socio-political activities other than agriculture and looking after their families, so they have significantly less knowledge about the issues. Firstly, women in Naga society were prohibited from speaking or participating in politics. The researcher struggled to obtain responses from the female respondents due to their reluctance to answer many questions in the interview schedule, citing their unfamiliarity with the topic. Furthermore, female respondents were comparatively fewer due to the exigencies of household responsibilities, whereas men were available in most cases during the field visits. Most interviews were conducted with elites, such as Gaonboras, Dobashi, and council members from both towns and villages, as tribal elders possess more wisdom to discuss community conflicts and have a more profound historical knowledge of past incidents. According to the customary laws of the Naga tribes, decisions on governance-related issues are made by the tribal elders, all of whom are male.

**Table 2.3: Age Profile of Respondents:**

Age group	Community		No. of respondents	Percentage %
	Yimkhiong	Tikhir		
<b>20-30</b>	12	20	32	24
<b>31-40</b>	16	12	28	21
<b>41-50</b>	18	9	27	20
<b>51-60</b>	3	17	20	15
<b>61-70</b>	4	9	13	10
<b>71 &amp; Above</b>	8	5	13	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Table 2.3 presents the distribution of respondents by age group. i.e., in this study, 24 % of the respondents are from the age group of between 20-30, which is the highest of the total respondents, followed by 21 % of the age group of between 31-40 years. While 20% of respondents are between 41 and 50, 15% are in the 51-60 age group. The ten per cent are under the age group between 61-70 years, and another 10 per cent is under the age group between 71 & above years. The study involved people above 60 years since most elders exercise full and final authority on all village matters. Elders are considered the headmen in managing the village's affairs and resolving conflict issues within the community. They speak on behalf of the people, and the final decision is made through the wisdom of elders to solve community issues as they arise.

**Table 2.4: Educational Profile of the Respondents**

Education	Community		Number of respondents	Percentage %
	Yimkhiung	Tikhir		
No formal education	1	11	12	9
Primary	11	17	28	21
Matriculate	6	10	16	12
Higher Secondary	12	5	17	13
Bachelor degree	17	26	43	32
Post-graduation & above	14	3	17	13
<b>Total no.</b>	61	72	133	100

Source: field work

Table 2.4 above shows that the majority, 32 per cent, of the respondents held Bachelor's degrees, followed by 13 per cent who had completed post-graduation studies. Also, 21% had primary education, 13% had higher secondary education, and 12% had matriculation. Nine per cent of the respondents had not achieved formal education. The composition of the respondents indicates that the literacy rate among these two tribes improved over the decade after the community conflict.

**Table 2.5: Occupation Profile of Respondents**

Occupation	Community		Number of respondents	Percentage %
	Yimkhiung	Tikhir		
Employee	18	7	25	19
Church workers	4	4	8	6
Farmers	8	17	25	19
Village Elders	17	20	37	28
Dobashis	5	3	8	6
Youth	9	21	30	22
<b>Total no.</b>	61	72	133	100

Source: field work

Table 2.5 explains the occupation profile of the respondents in the study. The analysis above shows that the majority, 28 per cent, of the respondents were village elders. This is followed by 19 per cent of farmers whose occupation included part-time wage labour. Six per cent of church workers and another 6 per cent of the respondents were Dobashi, who handle political issues. The highest percentage of respondents is village leaders, as this occupation encompasses Gaonburas, Tribal members, town chairmen, and Council Members of both towns and villages. They generally handle any issue related to the community, and most elders are experts on the conflict resolution mechanism within the community. Naga society traditionally relies on the wisdom of tribal elders to resolve issues and prevent hostility within the community.

**Table 2.6: Residence of respondents**

Residence	Community		Number of respondents	Percentage %
	Yimkhiung	Tikhir		
Shamator	41	3	44	33
shamator village	0	30	30	23
Kiphire	1	7	8	6
Kohima	4	9	13	10
Dimapur	9	3	12	9
Mokokchung	6	0	6	4
kiusam (Khipire)	0	17	17	13
Mon	0	3	3	2
<b>Total no.</b>	61	72	133	100

Source: field work

Table 2.6 indicates that 56 per cent of the respondents were from Shamator town and Shamator village, followed by 13 per cent from Kiusam Headquarters, which is predominantly populated by those speaking the Tikhir dialect who had permanently relocated to these areas for other reasons. The other 10 per cent and 9 per cent are from Kohima and Dimapur, mostly respondents from either tribe who reside in these places for their earnings; other reasons may include government employment, education, and a few due to family

reasons, such as a spouse from another tribe. Lastly, four per cent of respondents from Mokokchung were mostly government-employed and daily earners who had transferred from Tuensang and Shamator. Most of the respondents are from the Shamator and Kiusam areas, as these are the homelands of both the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Nagas.

**Table 2.7: The home setting of respondents**

Sl. No	Home Setting	Yimkhiung	Tikhir	Total	Percentage
1	Rural	32	52	84	64%
2	Urban	29	20	49	36%
Total				133	100

Source: field work

Here, Table 2.7 shows that the majority of respondents, at 64 per cent, are from rural areas. This is because field studies were primarily conducted in conflict-affected areas, including three villages under the Shamator district and four additional villages under the Kiphire district. The primary participants were farmers and village council members. Around 36 per cent were from urban areas, including Dimapur, Kohima and Mokokchung, and most participants were government servants, private employees and college students.

The Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes are larger Naga ethnic groups primarily inhabiting Shamator, Tuensang, and Khipheri of Nagaland. They share several cultural, linguistic and historical similarities. Both communities have a long history of cultural exchange and have been together for over four decades. Both ethnic groups share similar agricultural practices, including jhum cultivation, and observe similar themes in their festivals, such as Thanksgiving, which celebrates life. However, both groups celebrate at their own time. The Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes share similarities in many ways, but also have distinct differences between the groups. Both groups speak a Tibeto-Burman language, but their dialects differ in terms of vocabulary and word usage.

## Chapter III

### HISTORY OF ETHNIC IDENTITY ASSERTION AND CONFLICT

#### **Historical background of the Yimkhiung Naga Tribe:**

Yimkhiung belongs to the Ao branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. Yimkhiung means "the ones who have reached their place of choice". They are also known as the Yachumi (Yatsumi or Yachimi), a Sumi-influenced name. The Khamniungans call them as Mongtsohai. The Changs call them Yamshong. At the same time, the Sangtams call them Yachungre. Yimkhiung is also known as Yimkhiung Naga, Yachumi or Yatsumi.<sup>24</sup> Their traditional territory includes Shamator and Kiphire, but now they are spread into the Dimapur district in Nagaland. The tribe's name officially changed from Yimchunger to Yimkhiung in September 2021. It is not the change of nomenclature but the rectification of spelling from Yimchunger to Yimkhiung. According to the 2011 census, the total population of Yimkhiung is 83,259 (Imlangba, 2024, para. 1). The Yimkhiung tribe is one of the unique tribes in Nagaland, comprising a conglomeration of six sub-dialects speaking communities, viz. Chirr, Langa, Longfurr, Mukury, Phelungri, and Tikhir each speak their native dialects, which have similarities to a great extent. Among these sub-dialects, Langa is the most commonly used in Yimkhiung literature and for all official purposes. The residents in the region are quite favourable towards English, which they enjoy as their second language and consider useful for almost all purposes. The Yimkhiung community has also established its literature committee, which is dedicated to promoting language development. So far, the Yimkhiung language is not taught in schools and higher classes, but is used only for religious literature (*Borubo*)<sup>25</sup> purposes.

#### **Historical background of the Tikhir Naga Tribe:**

Among the Naga tribes, the Tikhir tribe is the most recently recognised Naga tribe of Nagaland. The Tikhir became a prominent tribe on January 1, 2022, after they separated from their Yimkhiung tribe. The Tikhir tribe inhabits the eastern part of Nagaland, primarily residing in the Shamator, Kiphire, and Noklak districts. An examination of the Tikhir

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<sup>24</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yimkhiung\\_Naga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yimkhiung_Naga)

<sup>25</sup> "*Borubo*" means literature in their local dialect of Yimkhiung Naga.

community's identity assertion may be necessary to understand their history. The Tikhir is one of the tribes of Nagaland, like other Naga tribes, which have also migrated from different Southeast Asian countries. The geographical and natural boundary of the Tikhir Territory is contiguous and stretches across the northeastern part of Nagaland (India), which borders Myanmar. They belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of Mongoloid stock and have a distinct cultural heritage. They speak *Tikhiliau* as their mother tongue. The Tikhirs have their first place of organised settlement at '*Taimiphu*,' located between the duo's rivers of Zingki and Yayi in Shamator Sub-Division. This transition and evolution date back to the 12th and 13th centuries. The Tikhir was initially known as *Tukhiauu*; however, after the British annexation of the Naga Hills, the name was altered to Tikhir. Since then, it has been used as the official name of the tribe. The Tikhirs are known and addressed differently by other Naga tribes, such as the Sangtams as 'Tikhere,' the Changs as 'Thikhupu,' the Khimnungan as 'Chitlihie,' and the Yimkhiung as '*Tukhiru*,' respectively. The Semas (Sumi) is called '*Tukhemi*' (Zaman, 2018, para.3-4).

History tells us that there were times when the Yimkhiung and other fellow sub-tribes, such as the Tikhir, had long-lasting relations. They have gathered to protect themselves from wild animals and enemies at different points in history. They shared the territorial boundaries and resources of the surrounding land with the warriors of both communities. Until the 1980s, villages lived in a peaceful atmosphere, as no corruption was known during that time. Multiple leaders were absent, and the chieftain was the only man with authority over his subjects. Their knowledge and experience had taught the community to be honest. The community felt a sense of oneness with the individual members, who also shared the same feeling. In the past, depression and violence among humans had very rarely occurred. However, modernity has transformed the pure and traditional conception of Naga society (Debbarma, 2014, pp. 111-113).

Religion has played a unifying role among the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities, but long-term relations did not last since the dominant community language had been practised for ages. The minority dialect was fading away within Tikhir, and they also tended to lose their

language and culture. The conflict within the Yimkhiung ethnic fold is that the Tikhir people (linguistic minority group) have sought to throw off their attributed identity as a Yimkhiung sub-tribe and claim a different disposition for themselves as a distinct major sub-tribe. This struggle has been marked by bitter and violent hostilities over decades in the Kiphire and Shamator districts of Nagaland (Das, 2014, p. 35).

### **Emergence of Conflict between Yimkhiung and Tikhir:**

The Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga tribes are among the economically disadvantaged Naga tribes residing in the Shamator and Kiphire districts of Nagaland. The long-standing relationship and contact between these two dialect-speaking Yimkhiung (Langa) and Tikhir (Tikhialiu) groups, as well as their interdependence for socio-cultural purposes. These indigenous people of the region have their own religious beliefs and practices. Both these communities disagree on their territory policy. Das describes that the conflict within the Yimkhiung ethnic fold is that the Tikhir people (linguistic minority group) have sought to throw off their attributed identity as a Yimkhiung sub-tribe and claim a different disposition for themselves as distinct major sub-tribes. This struggle has extended bitter and violent hostilities over decades in Nagaland's Kiphire and Shamator districts (2000, p. 35).

The Yimkhiung and Tikhir have coexisted in harmony for almost four decades, despite occasional clashes between clans and villages. However, by 1980, based on the sub-dialect, which suddenly became violent, clashes broke out between two dialect groups: the Langa, a Yimkhiung-speaking group, and the Tikhir dialect-speaking community (Belho, 2022, p. 19). The reason was that the Tikhir language was overshadowed by the Yimkhiung dialect, leading to stagnation in the Tikhir language and a significant lack of progress for the Tikhir community. It is significant to note that language not only became an instrument of identity assertion by the minority people but was also used as a catalyst for the consolidation of their rights, which eventually intensified the demand for a separate identity.

**Dialect separation:**

Ethnic conflict and linguistic issues never exist in Isolation. It is frequently yet more facet of how a person identifies. "Language (or linguistic) Identity means the speech community with which a person is identified. Most subjects of individual choice are culture and language, as it allows a person to identify with or belong to a culture and speak a particular language"(Wu, 2022, p.16). On the one hand, the dominant group in societies has used their political power and hegemonic instruments to subjugate the minority communities. However, this has led to counter-mobilisation by the latter to protect their distinct linguistic Identity (Gupta, 2016).

The Yimkhiung ethnic Tribe is a conglomerate of several sub-dialects, such as Chirr, Langa, Tikhir, Makory, Longphur, and Phununger, which are mostly unintelligible dialects. History tells us there were times when the Yimkhiung and other fellow sub-tribe Tikhir had long-lasting relations. They shared the territorial boundaries and resources of the surrounding land with the warriors of both communities. The comprehensive Yimkhiung Language, with the Langa dialect, was once the Language of the entire Yimkhiung and the Tikhir tribes. Tikhir people have a long and old history of relations with the Yimkhiung Naga tribe, the dominant group, which is why Tikhir is the minority group being swamped by the larger group. The respondents in the study reveal that the Tikhir dialect group living in Tuensang and Shamator towns constantly communicated with each other inside and outside their homes with Yimkhiung language.

Since the advent of Christianity and British rule, the Yimkhiung dialect has become the predominant medium of communication in the everyday life of the communities in the region. Tikhir were compelled to use another dialect (Langa) in everyday interactions as part of the Yimkhiung community, which generated feelings of alienation. Eventually, a group of people speaking in the Tikhir dialect stressed the need to be together to counter the dominant linguistic group. The quest to recognise certain dialect-speaking groups as tribes became a factor for communal tension and thus resulted in physical violence between Yimkhiung and Tikhir. In the past few decades, the consciousness of ethnic Identity and

diversity has significantly increased. From another source, dialect separation was due to inferior feelings towards the dominant group (Yimkhiung), who felt the discrimination had been done and strongly resented it, later started to make a difference with each culture, dialect, and other reasons, which problems turned into language identity.

Tikhir people have realised that assimilation and enculturation of Yimkhiung culture and language have loss of their cultural Identity. Over time, they found that children were not learning Tikhir language, given the social environment. This very reason had created fear in the minds of some Tikhir, losing their Identity. Due to realisation of the importance, individuals of Tikhir have started relearning their language. As a result, many families began communicating with their children in the Tikhir dialect at home.

Moreover, the Tikhir tribe has encountered difficulties in not benefiting equally from state development programs like other groups, which caused feelings of hostility towards the Yimkhiung community. Another reason was that over time, the dominant language was most often used by the Tikhir dialect, which drifted little from the original language and became distinct in its dialect (Tikhir, 2005). The various dialects between the Langa (dominant group) and Tikhir (minority linguistic group) and the linguistic affinity are discernible even today. *One of the Tikhir respondents had narrated that "The Tikhir dialect was not allowed to be spoken; if someone violated this order, the person was tortured and kidnapped; people have gone through fear and trauma. Tikhir people were threatened if they used their dialect as their identity was subject to a fine and a ransom of Rs 1000 in 1967."*<sup>26</sup> *These circumstances adversely affected the socio-economic life of the Tikhir people. Further, the Tikhir felt that they were gradually losing their land, culture, identity, and way of life as a result of isolation, which made them feel like refugees in their land.* So, the emergence of the Tikhir identity is a modern phenomenon that have a roots in history. The larger group has subjugated a minor ethnic group by using the tool of language. However, Language not only became an instrument of

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<sup>26</sup> A018 , age 31, Tikhir , student apex member , kiphire

identity assertion for the minority people but was also used as a catalyst for consolidating their rights, which eventually intensified the demand for a separate identity (Yimkhiungrutruk, 2019).

### **Role of Christianity in Building Ethnic Consciousness:**

In the early headhunting years, as in all Naga villages, there were no tribal sentiments or tribal organisations. Every villager was for their village. A village was like a micro kingdom with the village head as its ruler. All the other villages were treated as enemies, attacked, and looted whenever the opportunity arose. So, there was no special friendship even in the Tikhir village. After the advent of Christianity in the Naga hills by the American Baptist missionaries and the introduction of education, revolutionary changes started taking shape, which ignited the spark of tribalism, fervour and partisanship. After the Ao areas' Christianization and modern education, the Ao sent their missionaries to the Yimkhiung areas to spread Christianity and modern education. The Yimkhiung gradually formed their tribal organisation, and their leaders, knowing their ancestral land was comparatively small, started planning to bring all the Tikhir villagers under the Yimkhiung tribe. While this revolution was going on, the Tikhir were deep in their slumber, still busy with their headhunting. The Tikhir was one of the last Nagas who abandoned the headhunting practice.

Before the advent of Christianity in the area, the Tikhir villagers maintained cordial relations with the Yimkhiung community and voluntarily accepted the Yimkhiung language for communication purposes. Langa dialect is the dominant one used by all the dialect-speaking communities of Yimkhiung in the region. Eventually, the Yimkhiung (Langa) dialect was made compulsory under the Shamator circle. As a result of this situation, the Tikhir minority group eventually ceased using their own Tikhir dialect due to the widespread use of the Langa dialect in the area.

In the latter part of the 1940s, with the advent of Christianity in Nagaland, and more particularly in the Yimkhiung area, the people began to convert to Christianity, and gradually, the headhunting culture began to be abandoned. In the late 1950s, Christianity came to the Tikhir community through the Yimkhiung and indirectly through the Ao tribe. The Yimkhiung sent Ao and Yimkhiung pastors, along with other missionaries, to the Tikhir villages to convert them to Christianity. Although distinct, Yimkhiung and Tikhir had a long-standing relationship and lived together in harmony for many decades as a family. Tikhir was affiliated with the Church under Yimkhiung, with the intention of saving their souls. Thus, Yimkhiung, who were numerically more significant in the region, began to dominate various social domains, including leadership in the church, tribal associations, and political parties. Over time, Yimkhiung became economically and politically powerful, quickly mobilised people, and assimilated the Tikhir into the Yimkhiung community. Langa dialect is commonly used since it is known and spoken fluently by every Yimkhiung tribe. In Yimkhiung society, the Langa dialect was commonly used for literary work and church activities. The Naga pioneer missionaries who worked solely in the Yimkhiung domain had gradually developed this particular language dialect, among the six distinct dialects, as a common language under the broader umbrella of the Yimkhiung tribe identity.

Later, the Tikhir villages were affiliated with the Yimkhiung Baptist church association without the knowledge and consent of the villagers. In this way, all of the Tikhir villages came under this association. Gradually, the villagers of Tikhir converted to Christianity by adopting the doctrines of the Christian faith. In 1963, some educated Tikhir reintroduced their dialect and translated the Christian hymns and a few books of the New Testament into the Tikhir dialect to use in their church. However, their demand was rejected, and 200 hymn books were forcefully burned. When the Tikhir community approached forming a separate organisation (*TBPA-Tikhir Baptist Piti Atukhianti*) within their community, Yimkhiung only accepted if proper consultation had taken place. In 1980, out of resentment, a village of the Tikhir dialect disassociated from the YBBA- *Yimkhiung Baptist Borü Amükhungdo* (Tikhir, 2005)

### **Linguistic assertion by the Tikhir Naga Tribes**

The Tikhir Naga tribe is known as the earliest native inhabitants, and 'Taimephu is referred to as "the first settlement place of Tikhir Naga." Taimephu, situated on a hillock at the confluence of the Thurak (Zungki) and Yaye rivers, is approximately 5 km away from Wapher village in the Shamator District. The Tikhir tribe first settled at this place around the 12th century AD'.<sup>27</sup> They had their kingdom, tradition, culture, and language.

As Belho (2022) explained here, until the 1970s, the Yimkhiung and Tikhir lived together, although they often fought between the village and clan. Both speak their home dialect, which has many similarities. Every Yimkhiung, including the Tikhir people, used the Yimkhiung script in the Langa dialect earlier. The Tikhir community also voluntarily adopted the Yimkhiung language to express their ideas to one another. However, the language of Tikhir was overruled as a distinct language, and everyday use of the language (Yimkhiung language) had resulted in limited use of their Tikhir dialect, which led to a setback to progress (p. 19).

The Yimkhiung language has been set aside for the literature committee and is not taught in schools and higher classes, but is used only for religious literature (Borubo) purposes. The major languages of the geographical areas had become compulsory under the Shamator circle. The Langa dialect is the dominant language of the Yimkhiung tribe and has evolved into a 'lingua franca', commonly used to communicate among interethnic groups. However, the Tikhir dialect-speaking group is unable to write in the Langa dialect, and some individuals do not speak the dominant language due to the unfamiliar script. 'The growing tribal consciousness towards preserving their culture on the way to asserting their Tikhir identity in society has brought about a new dimension in the field of the cultivation of their own Tikhir language. The Tikhir movement led to the formation of various Tikhir tribal organisations (Yutsu, 2005, pp. 7-8). 'The early organisations that came up in 1965 were the Tikhir Public Movement (TPM), which was formed at Chikiuponger village, and the office bearers. In 1970, a new team of office bearers was selected, and the nomenclature was also

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<sup>27</sup> Morung Express, February 24th, 2017 (first settlement place of Tikhir Naga).  
<https://morungexpress.com/students-visit-first-settlement-place-tikhir-naga> ↑

rechristened from TPM to Tikhir Tribal Movement (TTM). In January 1981, at Sukiur village, a new formation of the Tikhir Student Union' (Ibid, p.9). These processes reflect the growing consciousness and assertion of their Tikhir identity and ethnicity. Therefore, the ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes was akin to a tug-of-war between minority languages and the dominant one.

### **The Identity Assertion by the Tikhir:**

The geographical and natural boundaries of the Tikhir Territory are contiguous and stretch across the northeastern part of Nagaland (India), which borders Myanmar. They belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of Mongoloid stock and have a distinct cultural heritage. They speak *Tikhiliau* as their mother tongue. The Tikhirs have their first place of organised settlement at a place called "*Taimiphu*," which is located between the two rivers of Zingki and Yayi in Shamator Sub-Division. This transition and evolution date back to sometime around the 12th and 13th centuries. The Tikhir originally was known as *Tukhiauu*; however, after the British annexation of the Naga Hills, the name was altered to Tikhir. Since then, it has been used as the official name of the tribe. The growing tribal consciousness towards protecting their culture, as they assert their Tikhir identity in society, has brought about a new dimension in cultivating the Tikhir language. The Tikhir people now strive to preserve and promote their tribal Tikhir ethnic identity, culture, language, and history, in order to protect them from being overwhelmed by the other community cultures, and also to free themselves from the domination they feel they have been subjected to, as they have been deprived of their fundamental rights. Gradually, the Yimkhiung community's polarisation of Tikhir, the sub-dialect group, and the cultural consciousness of the particular group caused Tikhir's identity assertion. This led to the establishment of the Tikhir Tribal Council (TTC) in 1982. Eventually, it led to the establishment of the apex student body, religious wings, Tikhir women's HOHO, and other Tikhir-based organisations. The entire Tikhir community had made protests against the government for a separate tribe. All the Tikhir villagers started to unify against the imposition and enforced dominance of the Langa dialect. The Tikhir community initiated a widespread effort to establish separate Tikhir organisations to preserve their ethnic identity in society. In 1965, the Tikhir Public Movement (TPM) was established in Chikiuponger village, with a few office bearers taking charge of the organisation. In 1970,

a new team of office bearers was selected, and the nomenclature was also rechristened from TPM to TTM, with the full form being Tikhir Tribal Movement (Yutsu, 2005, p. 9).

In January 1981, a new formation of the Tikhir Student Union occurred at Sukiur village. In 1982, the Tikhir Tribal Council (TTC) was established. Eventually, even the apex student body, religious wing, and Tikhir women's HOHO (the apex body) initiated protests against the government for a different tribal status (Das, 2014, p. 51). These processes reflected the growing consciousness and assertion of their Tikhir ethnicity and identity. With the unmet demand of the Tikhir minority groups, the language issue was used as propaganda to get political support and attention for forming identity rights to be carved out of the Yimkhiung Naga tribes. During 1981-82, conflict broke out in Shamator, which later spread to the Kiphire district between Yimkhiung communities related to language, specifically a sub-dialect tribe, the Tikhir, who had demanded a separate identity. Due to the conflict, every corner of the villages/areas became completely shattered and usurped by the mob. The conflict-affected people no longer wished to stay in such disturbed environments and were compelled to migrate to safer places for survival. Many families were displaced for their children's education and to safeguard the lives of their spouses from possible physical attacks. They shifted to outlying towns like Kohima and Dimapur for safety. It further resulted in the loss of livelihood opportunities since most of them depended on agriculture. These migrated families began engaging in petty business to survive in their new locations. Such ethnic violence incidents have made many innocents suffer and forced them to migrate to other places, thus resulting in poverty in those families. The respondents reported that many families had been relocated to other towns and villages in the Tuensang, Kiphire, and Dimapur districts of Nagaland.

Further, in November 1989, a mob attacked and burned down Tikhir Baptist Church in Shamator town, destroying the furniture and hymn books, including the Holy Bible. Even the church's pastor's residence was also damaged by the mob. For centuries, both the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities have been living in peace and have been interdependent.

However, these incidents have disrupted this historical continuity between the two tribes (Gupta, 2016, p. 3). This ethnic conflict has led to tremendous human suffering, especially in the Tikhir Naga minority tribe of Nagaland, and it also remains an issue on the state's political agenda. Ethnic mobilisation leads to ethnic movement, and it often turns into extremism and violence in society. Various groups allege that they have adopted the path of extremism to achieve their goals, as things cannot be fixed and achieved through normal channels of liberal democracy. This impacts identity consciousness among various communities. It is further aggregated by regional consciousness of elites and middle-class groups. Another dimension is that the dominant communities allied with state power, which exclude certain groups from access to resources, institutions, and opportunities, which makes other groups feel excluded. In such a situation, smaller ethnic communities assert for resources and opportunities.

The assertion of marginalised identities and their extremist posture is taking a new direction to the politics in the region. The following are major factors responsible for identity movement in minority communities can be discussed as follows. The eastern region is one of the underdeveloped districts of Nagaland. Uneven pace of development, scarce economic resources, political stability, employment, and socio-cultural and linguistic status of the people. As a result, Tikhir ethnic tribe have become conscious of losing their own distinctive linguistic and ethnic identity, and many have asserted it through identity movements. The denial of one's own cultural and linguistic identity, such perceptions, led to ethnic conflict between ethnic groups over linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, which has emerged as an essential reason behind the rise of identity assertion movements. With the emergence and expansion of modern education, seeds of identity consciousness were sown among the Tikhir, which has mobilised people and made them aware of their situation, often leading to heightened identity consciousness. To protect their distinctive socio-cultural and linguistic identity, a sense of ethnic identity movement emerged among minority groups, leading to the growth of the identity movement in the Tikhir dialect community. Gradually, the unresolved economic concerns began to shift in a political direction. The atmosphere of neglect and indifference expedited the withdrawal process further. The hurt sentiment of the minority

group realised that, without political power, no malady could be remedied, and as a result, bargaining for political power began. This consciousness, arising from sharing a typical habitat and culture, including language and social traditions, provides the tribe or nation with the resource for developing a shared identity essential for unified action as a group.

**The role of ethnic association in the identity Assertion by the Tikhir:**

‘During the 1960s, one underground faction of Naga insurgency groups attempted to create a separate region for the Chirr, Makory, and Tikhir dialect-speaking communities. However, this attempt could not succeed; nevertheless, this act has led to the feeling of a separate Tikhir identity among the people’ (Yutsu, 2005, pp. 9-13). The increasing feelings of alienation among the Tikhir led to a demand for separate tribes. Additionally, the growth and development of modern education have contributed to the increasing awareness of the Tikhir community. The ever-increasing tribal consciousness towards protecting their culture, as they assert their Tikhir identity in society, has brought about a new dimension in cultivating the Tikhir language. The Tikhir people strive to preserve and promote their Tikhir ethnic identity, culture, language, and history, in order to protect them from being overwhelmed by the other community cultures, and also to liberate themselves from the domination they feel they have been subjected to, as they have been deprived of their fundamental rights. Gradually, the Yimkhiung community's polarisation of Tikhir, the sub-dialect group, and the cultural consciousness of the particular group caused Tikhir's identity assertion.

There were times when the relationship was quite brotherly and fraternal before being identified as the Tikhir sub-dialect of the Naga tribe. The Yimkhiung ethnic tribe comprises a conglomerate of several sub-dialects, including Chirr, Langa, Tikhir, Makory, Longphur, and Phununger, which are mostly unintelligible dialects. History tells us that there were times when the Yimkhiung and other fellow sub-tribes, such as the Tikhir, had long-lasting relations. They used to gather for protection from wild animals and enemies at different points in history. They shared the territorial boundaries and resources of the surrounding land with the warriors of both communities. Until the 1980s, villages lived in a peaceful atmosphere, as no corruption was known during that time. Multiple leaders were absent, and the chieftain was the only man with authority over his subjects. Their knowledge and experience had taught the community to be honest. The community felt a sense of oneness

with the individual members, who also shared the same feeling. In the past, depression and violence among humans had very rarely occurred. However, modernity has transformed the pure and unfolded traditional conception of Naga society (Debbarma, 2014, pp. 111-113).

The Tikhir community did not create a new identity of their own; instead, they consciously selected some aspects of their history as the basis of their identity and to preserve the culture derived from their past origins and ancestry. As the consciousness of being a Tikhir was gradually developing, they sometimes resorted to violent means to get the state government's attention to fulfil their demand for recognition of a separate Tikhir tribe identity. Thus, the Tikhir movement began to emerge by forming various Tikhir tribal organisations to fight on an ethnic basis for greater power and political authority for the Tikhir people within the community. The early organisation, formed in 1965, was the Tikhir Public Movement (TPM), established at Chikiuponger village. The office bearers were:

1. Mr. Khiungmong (Chairman)
2. Mr. Tomusu (vice-chairman)
3. Mr. Yongpan (General Sect),
4. Mr. Torepkiu (Joint Sect).

In 1965, the Tikhir Public Movement (TPM) was established in Chikiuponger village, with a few office bearers taking charge of the organisation. In 1970, a new team of office bearers was selected, and the nomenclature was also rechristened from Tikhir Public Movement (TPM) to Tikhir Tribal Movement (TTM). In January 1981, at Sukiur village, a new formation called the Tikhir Student Union (TSU) was established. In 1982, at Mutonger village, the first general conference of the Tikhir Student Union took place (Yutsu, 2016, p. 9). These processes reflect the growing consciousness and assertion of their Tikhir ethnicity and identity. It ultimately resulted in the formation of the Tikhir Tribal Council (TTC) in 1983, and eventually, the apex student body, religious wings, Tikhir women's HOHO, and other Tikhir-based organisations. The entire Tikhir group had initiated protests against the state government, demanding recognition as a separate tribe for the Tikhir people (Das, 2014, p. 51). All the Tikhir villagers started to unify against the imposition and enforced dominance

of the Langa dialect. The Tikhir community widely started an initiative to form separate Tikhir organisations to protect their ethnic identity in society.

The newly emerging educated Tikhir consciously mobilise the people based on a distinct Tikhir identity and define their ethnicity in the broadest sense to include all the related tribes in and outside. As one helpful way of connecting and mobilising the common masses is through mass media, the newly educated try to inculcate the idea of a distinct Tikhir identity through social media, agitation, and other public voices. Even though it was not seem to be the official intention of the missions to be involved closely in the identity formation process, the historical juncture of their interaction with the people gives their role in constructing the Tikhir identity a profound significance.

From 1980 onwards, the relationship between the Yimkhiung and the Tikhir Naga was marked by animosity, war, and issues concerning identity. Therefore, both the communities have been the boundary of their social and political relationship, which is quite limited. These processes reflected the growing consciousness and assertion of their Tikhir ethnicity and identity. With the unfulfilled demand of the Tikhir minority groups, the language issue was used as propaganda to garner political support and attention for forming identity rights to be carved out of the Yimkhiung Naga tribes. Hence, the ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes was like a tug-of-war with claims and counterclaims made by both these groups on their identity. During 1981-82, conflict broke out in Shamator, which later spread to the Kiphire district between Yimkhiung communities related to language by a sub-dialect tribe, Tikhir, who had demanded a separate identity. Due to the conflict, every corner of the villages/areas became completely shattered and usurped by the mob. The conflict-affected people no longer wished to stay in such disturbed environments and were compelled to migrate to safer places to survive. Many families were displaced for their children's education and to safeguard the lives of their spouses from possible physical attacks. They shifted to outlying towns like Kohima and Dimapur for safety. It further resulted in the loss of livelihood opportunities since most of them depended on agriculture. These migrated families started doing petty business to survive in the new places. Such ethnic violence incidents have made many innocents suffer and forced them to migrate to other areas, thus resulting in poverty in those families. It was found from the respondents that many families

were shifted and relocated to different towns and villages in the Tuensang, Kiphire, and Dimapur districts of Nagaland.

Further, in November 1989, a mob attacked and burned down Tikhir Baptist Church in Shamator town, destroying the furniture and hymn books, including the Holy Bible. Even the church's pastor's residence was also damaged by the mob. For centuries, both the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities have been living in peace and have been interdependent. However, these incidents have broken this historical continuity between the two tribes. This ethnic conflict has led to tremendous human suffering, especially in the Tikhir Naga minority tribe of Nagaland, and it also remains an issue on the state's political agenda. This issue has become a sensitive issue in the eastern area of Nagaland state.

**Ethnic identity formation:**

Judging from a socio-anthropological angle, tribal identity formation takes place mainly due to economic deprivation. Deprivation or dissatisfaction very often causes identity formation. Social inequality and breeds dissatisfaction are outburst due to age-long standing depravity. The consciousness of the kind has long been an attribute of human groups, whether tribal or national communities. This consciousness arising out of sharing a common habitat and culture, including language and social tradition, gives the tribe or the nation the resource of developing a common identity, which is essential for unified action as a group. Articulation of ethnic identity can be perceived as a historical process that combines both intentional and unintentional ways of behavioural patterns. Ethnic identity can also be changed as a result of historical social transformation. Ethnic consciousness is not inborn but rather a constituent of many levels of identification and feeling (Sengupta, 2014, p.100).

MC Paul (1992), as cited in Hazarika (2019) has pointed out reason for ethnic identity assertion is due to severe socio-economic deprivation and deep feelings of discontentment for a long time among the plain tribes have acted as a catalyst to throw them into the vortex of the movement (p.2197). In other words, the ethnic movement among the plains tribes is a

product of the inner contradictions in the socio-economic and political system. They are increasingly aware of the oppositions and injustices and are becoming restless. The educated and conscious articulated sections of the Naga people are now leading the tribes to try to articulate their plight. Judging from a socio-anthropological angle, tribal identity formation is mainly due to economic deprivation. 'Even Sengupta (2014) describes that due to poor and slow economic development, vested interests, and exploitation of leaders, even among the elite tribal leaders, are determining factors for developing a sense of identity formation among the ethnic groups. The paternalistic attitude of the colonist rulers and even of planners and administrators of the post-independence period contributed largely to the formation of the contemporary tribal identity' (pp.101-102).

Even in my study areas, many of the respondents from the Tikhir tribe under Kiusam town have shared their problems about facilities, lack of roads, education institutions, lack of social infrastructure, absence of physical infrastructure, electricity, and unemployment. They found themselves unable to stand up against their counterparts in other societies, which led to a movement on their ethnic identity. 'The reason for ethnic identity formation, firstly, is that intolerance and imperviousness lead to the growth of a feeling of discrimination and alienation on the part of smaller groups. The dominant group possesses a tendency to brand all group aspirations and demands as anti-national or secessionist without going into their merits or demerits. The smaller groups get lost in the process of forced assimilation in the name of accommodation and integration. This gives rise to the desire for self-expression and an identity separate from that of the dominant groups. Along with such factors of ethnic identity formation, a crisis is created by another reason; secondly, 'there is politicisation, the very crisis arising out of linguistic, cultural and economic deprivation grows and develops into a conflict through political interference' (Garg, p.4). Politics is about the transformative potential of social agents, agencies, and institutions, while politicisation implies the inclusion of certain issues in its domain. 'As per the Oxford Advanced Dictionary, politicisation implies the process of becoming politically conscious or organised. As the meaning of the term indicates, politicisation itself is not a negative concept. It helps the ethnic groups to grow conscious of their existence and rights. However, over-interference of politics in the

phenomenon of an identity crisis makes the situation worse (Ibid). . The present situation of identity, social formation, and the rise of sub-nationalism is largely due to political orientation in the wrong direction. Thirdly, the presence of other group interference is again felt and grows to its full capacity, causing a threat to the community. In the past, many tribespeople of other communities, like Chang, Sangtam, Khamniungan, and Sumi, converted to Yimkhiung, which unfortunately later brought division to the village.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CAUSES OF ETHNIC CONFLICT**

Northeast India has been a distinct geographical, socio-economic, cultural, and political civilisation. It consists of eight states with linguistically and culturally diverse people: Assam, Meghalaya Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. According to the Indian government, granting statehood and autonomous district status is a way to devolve decision-making and maintain the 'demographic uniqueness' of Northeast India, in effect providing ethnic 'homelands' to specific groups. According to the sixth schedule of the Indian constitution, district councils have given extensive powers of legislation and administration of justice, powers to establish primary schools, assess and collect land revenue and impose taxes, issue leases for prospecting or extracting minerals, and make regulations for the control of money lending and trading by non-tribals. Vital devolution of powers combined with weak law enforcement and monitoring, and a 'winner-takes-all' political culture, has created the stage for violent homeland politics.

According to Khobragade (2019), inter-ethnic are always indulge in conflicts such as Naga,, Ahom, Bodo, Khasi, Mizo and others. The case of expatriation of a large number of Brus from Mizoram or Paites from Manipur presents a picture of an increasingly hostile inter-ethnic coexistence. The incidences of the Bodo-Santhal conflicts and Karbi-Khasi clashes in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam and Shillong are regular. The conflicts between the Kukis and Nagas in Manipur are one of the prominent cases. The tribals and ethnic groups individually fight for their narrow interests and not for the welfare of an entire region' (p.1167). Since independence, ethnic conflict in the northeast region has become endemic. Ethnic conflict includes inter-ethnic conflicts and conflicts between various insurgent groups or their involvement in the conflict. One particular situation of ethnic conflict may reflect one, two or all three kinds of conflict at the same time. India's Northeast has been sharply on the rise in the population displacement from ethnic conflict since 1980. In the past, most conflicts and violence in the region had been confined to various armed groups and security forces of the state, which triggered large-scale population displacement. The dynamics of violence and conflict in the region have been slowly changing, as borne out by the fact that

it shows an alarming propensity to engulf an even more significant number of people involved in violence and conflict (Borgohain & Sinha, 2014, p.13)

### **The Insurgency in Nagaland:**

The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) seeks independence and the creation of a greater Nagaland, which also includes territory now in Myanmar, based on ethnicity, and the Naga National Council (Adino). The "Naga Sovereignty" question was put to a plebiscite on 16 May 1951. To defend themselves, the Naga, after much deliberation, organised the NNC, which is known as NSG (Naga Security Guards), under the leadership of Kaito Sukhai (Saxena, 2016, para.4-5). 'After independence, failed negotiations on the incorporation of the Naga Hills into the Indian union led the Naga National Council (NNC) to assert the sovereignty of Nagaland. After years of armed violence, the state of Nagaland was finally carved out of Assam in 1963 in an attempt to address the intractable demand for Naga self-rule (Ibid, para.8-10). The Nagas accomplished in achieving their state set a powerful example, motivating other groups to make their territorial demands. The prevailing state autocracy has put an end to violence involving government forces.

The pacification policies of the GoI in the Northeast have caused more difficulties than they have solved, further complicating possible solutions. The creation of Nagaland, for example 1963, failed to meet Naga's demands for self-determination, not only because statehood is a far cry from autonomy but also because Nagas inhabit a much wider geographical area, including in Myanmar, than that encompassed by the state's boundaries. It would not be too fanciful to describe this step as a further partition of the Nagas. 'The signing of the Shillong Accord in 1975 with individuals who were not only said to be unrepresentative of Naga interests but also to have limited freedom of action, some of whom were in detention, was a cause of further conflict rather than a step forward in the peace process'(Ibid, para7). According to Lacina (2009), in 1988, the Naga militant group of NSCN split into the NSCN-IM and NSCN-K. Both groups are well-established in their respective fiefdoms, exercising powers of taxation and possessing sophisticated military outfits. Most of the continuing violence in Nagaland today is fighting between the NSCN rivals as well as their operations against politicians, civilians, and defectors (pp. 1014-1015).

‘Vibha (1996) has described Nagaland as inhabited by Nagas, who had extended beyond the political boundary of the state into Manipur, Kachari and Assam, southern Arunachal Pradesh and across the border in Myanmar’ (p. 46). ‘Khobragade (2019) also mentioned that Nagaland is called the epicentre of insurgencies as it was the first to be affected in the entire region. The insurgency has disturbed the centre's government and hampered the developmental process. Because the conflict prevailed not only between the insurgent groups and the government but also among the ethnic groups. Ethnic communities continued to nurse their feelings of difference and their own cultural identities. They are fighting to form independent states to preserve their cultural or ethnic identity, which is the most dominant objective that has emerged due to the fear of losing their distinct identity and cultural rights. The entire gamut of insurgencies is for independent nationalism because Indian independence has no benefit to the Nagas’ (pp. 1164-1165).

India considers the India-Naga conflict to be an internal civil war, and the Nagas defending themselves against an external aggressor. Historically, the Nagas were headhunters, which may have contributed to their independence throughout the waves of colonialism.<sup>28</sup> The insurgency in Nagaland, northeastern India, is an ongoing conflict fought between the ethnic Nagas and the government of India. Nagaland, inhabited by the Nagas, is located at the tri-junction border of India on the west and south and Myanmar on the east.

### **Insurgency interference in Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities:**

The conflict between Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga dates back to the era of the Naga National Council (NNC) as its starting point. One of the respondents narrated, “*This ethnic conflict occurred within the community due to the involvement of the Naga National Council (NNC) and manipulating our community*”.<sup>29</sup> According to the respondent, “*In the year between 1953-54, Naga National Council (NNC) was formed in the Yimkhiung area and tried to dominate the community and later interfere in the matter and make the community involved,*

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<sup>28</sup> CHRI News, Summer 2004, p.1

<sup>29</sup> Lakiumong, aged 104, Male, Yimkhiung, Gaonbura, Shamator town.

*which created chaos and misunderstanding*".<sup>30</sup> NNC was split into different factions, and on 22 March 1956, separate armed wings were formed as NFG (Naga Federation Govt), and the 'Revolutionary Government of Nagaland' (RGN). The RGN faction is joined by a Tikhir dialect-speaking leader, thus paving the way for a separate group for them. The Yimkhiung community perceived it as a selfish motive for supremacy, and they believed that it further led to the fragmentation of Yimkhiung families, forming a new underground faction to create a separate region. However, this eventually evolved into a distinct and separate tribe demand (Yimkhiungrutruk, 2019).<sup>31</sup>

This incorrect navigation led to hostility between the two communities, and thus, the conflict began in the early 1970s. NNC was to fight for the Naga identity and resistance against foreign powers; however, the emergence of these two factions turned it into a fight between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir brothers, becoming a stumbling block to the path of conciliation (Savi, 2012, p. 280). From 1996 to 1998, the two insurgent groups attacked each other and suffered the most from the innocent public, who lived in fear of both bullets and starvation. The conflict between Yimkhiung and Tikhir ended in chaos. Many villages and towns under Shamator and Kiphire were attacked and destroyed, and many houses and properties were damaged. During the attack, two groups and a combined force from the neighbouring tribe, the Khamniungan, were also involved, which resulted in misunderstandings and significant instability in the region, as factions of the group fought for their agendas rather than community peace (Yutsu, 2005, pp. 10-13).

The following section in this chapter explains the various perceptions and opinions of the respondents on the ongoing ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes in Nagaland.

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<sup>30</sup> SC.Akhan, aged 79, male, Yimkhiung community, Head Gaonbura, Shamator town.

<sup>31</sup>Yimkhiungrutruk, 2019. "About Yimchunger"

**Table 4.1: Awareness of the Conflict**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						Total
		Employee	church workers	Farmers	Village Elders <sup>32</sup>	Dobashis	Youth	
Yes	Yimkhiung	17(13)	4(3)	8(6)	17(13)	5(4)	6(5)	57(43)
	Tikhir	7(5)	4(3)	16(12)	19(14)	3(2)	18(14)	67(50)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>24(18)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>24(18)</b>	<b>36(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>24(18)</b>	<b>124(93)</b>
No	Yimkhiung	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	2(2)	3(2)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	2(2)	2(1)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>
No response	Yimkhiung	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	1(1)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	2(1)	3(2)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>
Category-wise Total		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>36(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>31(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 4.1 explains the respondents' awareness levels of the conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir. It was indicated that 93 per cent of respondents from both communities claimed to be aware of the conflict situation and the hostile relations between these two communities. The village's elders comprised 27 per cent of the respondents, and Dobashi comprised six per cent. Six per cent of the respondents were aware of the conflict, and the rest shared the same views. It was revealed that community conflict is due to dialect issues. One of the respondents said that “*communal disharmony between Yimkhiung and Tikhir was deep-rooted for some decades, because of certain dialect-speaking groups' claims for separate identity from our community*”.<sup>33</sup> Out of the total 25 per cent of farmer respondents, it was found that 18 per cent of the respondents claimed to be aware of the situation and believed that conflict and violence in the community are caused by leadership issues that have failed to keep the community safe. Another Yimkhiung respondent narrated that “*The good bond relations within the community became chaotic because of the involvement of the insurgency. It created many problems since faction groups were in their interest and started opposing each other's ideas, which caused many misunderstandings within the community and later*

<sup>32</sup> Note: Village elders include Gaonburas, Village council members, Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribal council members

<sup>33</sup> Tsuyhiba, aged 41, male, Yimkhiung, Tribal apex member, Shamator District.

*chaos*".<sup>34</sup> One of the farmer respondents from the Tikhir community said that *"The conflict between the communities is due to a leadership crisis; since the beginning, the leaders have not taken their responsibilities seriously and have taken power with no vision, which later results in ordinary people's consequences"*.<sup>35</sup> Under the 'employees' category, which comprised 18 per cent of the respondents, they stated that they were aware of communal tensions and believed that conflict within the community is related to elite groups, dialect issues, and land issues. Within the youth respondents category, the majority of respondents were aware of the conflict and shared the same views; the conflict is related to linguistics and the demand for autonomy by sub-tribes.

Table 4.1 indicates that out of the total respondents, four per cent were unaware of the conflict. Interestingly, the majority of them fall within the youth category. The reason is that they are not aware of their ancestry history due to the generational gap, and most of them were away from the central conflict zone. One of the respondent said, *"Absolutely no clue what happened in the past between communities, maybe it is a kind of ancient incident, the present generation has less bother, and even most youth are away from the village for higher studies and visit home not frequently, which tend to lose attachment with the village situation"*.<sup>36</sup>

Lastly, three per cent of the respondents did not respond to conflict questions. Since they were uncomfortable and did not want to discuss the incident, they typically wanted to keep the inside story of the conflict private for fear of misquoting it. The other reason is that some families were from different villages and were fortunate to live peacefully without communal violence. One of the farmer respondents said, *"She has no social activities except her home responsibility and cultivation. Man handles social situations, so I am less bothered and also refrain from sharing things related to the community"*.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Kehoto, aged 48, Male, Yimkhiung , farmer, Shamator District.

<sup>35</sup> Athong aged 52 male, a farmer Tikhir, kiusam village, Kiusam town.

<sup>36</sup> Albert Tikhir, 21 years old, male, Student, Tikhir, Kohima District.

<sup>37</sup> Linshotus, aged 70 , female , Tikhir, farmer , kiusam .

**Table 4.2: Opinion on Yimkhiung /Tikhir as a conflict-torn society**

Response	Community	Profile of Respondents						Total
		Employee	church workers	Farmers	Village Elders	Dobashis	Youth	
Strongly agree	Yimkhiung	3(2)	1(1)	4(3)	10(7)	0(0)	0(0)	18(14)
	Tikhir	2(2)	1(1)	4(3)	10(7)	0(0)	4(3)	21(16)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>20(14)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>39(29)</b>
Agree	Yimkhiung	6(5)	2(2)	3(2)	4(3)	2(2)	3(2)	20(15)
	Tikhir	5(4)	3(2)	11(9)	9(7)	3(2)	11(9)	42(32)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11(9)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>14(11)</b>	<b>13(10)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>14(11)</b>	<b>62(47)</b>
Strongly disagree	Yimkhiung	4(4)	1(1)	0(0)	1(1)	3(2)	1(1)	10(7)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>10(7)</b>
Disagree	Yimkhiung	5(4)	0(0)	1(1)	2(2)	0(0)	5(4)	13(10)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	2(2)	1(1)	0(0)	6(5)	9(7)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>11(9)</b>	<b>22(17)</b>
<b>Category-wise Total</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(28)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 4.2 presents the respondents' opinions regarding a conflict-torn society. Of those who responded, 47 per cent agreed with the statement while 29 per cent strongly agreed. One of the respondents narrated, *“The chaos between our communities has caused a massive loss in education, wealth and life of many innocent people. Compared to other tribes in Nagaland, our community is quite distinct. We need the one priority factor to foster the economy and development: essential peaceful cooperation”*.<sup>38</sup> One of the Tikhir respondents said *that conflict issues have occupied our minds for many decades. The communities' attention was focused solely on finding solutions to the ethnic conflict, while the rest of the Naga tribes continued with education, adopting more technologies and other developments. It feels regretful to see the consequences for our people due to negligence and a lack of broader thought.*<sup>39</sup> However, in comparison, seven per cent of Yimkhiung respondents claimed they strongly disagreed with this, while 17 per cent of respondents mentioned they also disagreed with that statement.

<sup>38</sup> Shiuthong, aged 27, male, Tikhir community, student apex member, Shamator village.

<sup>39</sup> Ato, aged 43, male, Tikhir community: village council member, Shamator Village.

According to the interpretation of these findings, therefore indicates that Communal tension within the Yimkhiung community has had an adverse effects in every aspect of life; it led to the situation that that generated poor employment, down businesses due to the poor economy, and the education system kept depleting resulted into violent atmosphere in the subsequent period. Thus, the community disharmony resulted in a decline in progress in every aspect of life.

**Table 4.3: Major Reasons for the Conflict**

Response	Community	Profile of Respondents						Total
		Employee	church workers	Farmers	Village Elders	Dobashis	Youth	
Political leader	Yimkhiung	4(3)	2(2)	3(2)	2(2)	3(2)	0(0)	14(11)
	Tikhir	3(2)	0(0)	6(4)	5(4)	0(0)	5(4)	19(14)
	Total	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>9(7)</b>	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>33(25)</b>
Tribal council	Yimkhiung	2(2)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)
	Tikhir	3(2)	1(1)	4(3)	4(3)	0(0)	8(6)	20(15)
	Total	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>23(17)</b>
Lack of education	Yimkhiung	4(3)	1(1)	3(2)	9(7)	0(0)	2(2)	19(14)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	0(0)	4(3)	7(5)
	Total	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>12(9)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>6(4)</b>	<b>26(20)</b>
Lack of awareness	Yimkhiung	3(2)	0(0)	1(1)	1(1)	0(0)	2(2)	7(5)
	Tikhir	0(0)	1(1)	2(2)	0(0)	1(1%)	2(2)	6(5)
	Total	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>1(1%)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>13(10)</b>
Other specify	Yimkhiung	4(3)	1(1)	1(1)	4(3)	2(2%)	3(2)	15(11)
	Tikhir	1(1)	2(2)	4(3)	6(4)	2(2%)	1(1)	16(12)
	Total	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>10(7)</b>	<b>4(3%)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>31(23)</b>
No response	Yimkhiung	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	2(2)	3(2)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)
	Total	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>7(5)</b>
Category-wise Total		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6%)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 4.3 presents the respondents' opinions on the primary reasons for the conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes. It was found that 25 per cent believed that violence and torn communities are all because of poor leadership that is unable to take responsibility and is weak in decision-making. Due to a leadership crisis, governments have failed to pay attention and take action to protect community rights. One of the youth respondents said that *"Politics is the reason for this crisis in my community. If Manipulation of politics had not*

*existed from the very beginning, then we would have gone far beyond in development and progress”.*<sup>40</sup>

Out of the total respondents, 20 per cent believed that education arrived late to their land, which has caused a generation gap with the rest of the Naga society. Currently, the community has fewer government gazette officers, and even their people are less familiar with society. As per narration from an informant, *“the main issue is the economic and political discrepancies, though many attribute infamous ethnocentrism as the root. During the formative period of statehood, Yimkhiung was the fourth biggest tribe in Nagaland. However, the gradual process of annexation inundated the Yimkhiung tribe, whereby it shrunk into the present status, the latest being the Tuensang 2014 debacle between Yimkhiung and Chang tribes wherein the direct ramification was that the Yimkhiung of C/saddle village were chased out with arson attack in an attempt to usurp the entire village on the pretext of tribal conflict. Thus, the lack of good leadership and poor economy paved the way for the neighbouring tribes to take full advantage in dominating the Yimkhiung tribe”.*<sup>41</sup> One of the Tikhir respondents said that *“Tikhir respondents had said education is the eye of any development, but less emphasis on education in the past, today Tikhir people are lacking in many ways, like fewer gazette officers, qualified leaders, underdevelopment, unemployment and A down economy”.*<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, a total of 17 per cent of respondents opined that the problems within them are due to the absence of local authorities. Moreover, they are illiterate; there are no educated and intelligent leaders among them to act against the government in the pursuit of justice and reparation for their ordeal. And the reason is that the government corrupts the leaders of these communities. Another 10 per cent of the respondents state that issues in the community are because the people of the community lack knowledge of their community issues, and the government is less aware of such a crisis, which is another factor contributing to community issues.

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<sup>40</sup> Dokhim, aged 24, female, Yimkhiung, unemployed youth, Kohima

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Rejingkhum, 43, Male, Yimkhiung, Assistant Prof, Mokokchung District.

<sup>42</sup> Albert, aged 22, Male, Student, Tikhir community, Kohima

However, 23% of respondents believe that the conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir is caused by NNC factions in their land, which has diverted the innocent minds of villagers and eventually divided them into two groups, Tikhir and Yimkhiung, without the intention of their community, but through the manipulation of selfish individual leaders. Other reasons may include a lack of mutual understanding and a leadership crisis. Lastly, five per cent of respondents had no response related to this, as some people are not comfortable or do not want to discuss the conflict. They generally do not want to reveal the inside story of the conflict for fear of misquoting it.

The findings therefore reflect that community issues are not only single factors, but also multiple reasons, such as weak local governance and a lack of emphasis on education, which have led to suffering in all aspects of life. This ethnic issue had affected their education, career, economy and delayed development in their community. The ethnic conflict has led to tremendous human suffering, especially in the Yimkhiungru Naga minority tribe between the two sub-dialects, and it also remains an issue on the state's political agenda. This issue has become a sensitive issue in the eastern area of Nagaland state.

**Table 4.4: Adaptation of Multiple Dialects**

Response	Community	Profile of Respondents						
		Employee	church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	17(13)	4(3)	8(6)	17(13)	5(4)	5(4)	56(42)
	Tikhir	3(2)	1(1)	6(4)	7(5)	1(1)	6(5)	24(18)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20(15)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>14(10)</b>	<b>24(18)</b>	<b>6(4)</b>	<b>10(8)</b>	<b>80(60)</b>
No	Yimkhiung	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	1(1)
	Tikhir	4(3)	3(2)	10(8)	12(9)	2(2)	13(9)	44(33)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>10(8)</b>	<b>12(9)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>14(10)</b>	<b>45(34)</b>
Do not know	Yimkhiung	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>6(4)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>
<b>Category-wise Total</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(28)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(22)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 4.4 explains whether the ancestor had adapted multiple dialects without issues between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir. It was found that 60 per cent of respondents, the majority of respondents from the Yimkhiung community, said that they had adapted multiple dialects in the past by their ancestors without any issues. Respondents from all categories, village elder, Farmer, employee and Doabshi, all were from the Yimkhiung community, accepted this point and said that their ancestors had adopted these multiple languages as their identity without any issues within the communities. One of the Yimkhiung respondents said, *“During our forefather’s time, they identified each other by village, not tribe. They acclaimed themselves commonly as the Yimkhiung tribe and thereby endorsed the Langa dialect as a common medium of communication because even during the time of their bearer, Yimkhiung were living with multiple home dialects like Chirr, Makory, Tikhir and others but were less in use except Langa dialect was commonly spoken for accessible communication. Thus, the concept of tribe and identity priority is recent”*.<sup>43</sup>

Here again, another respondent from the Yimkhiung community had explained that *“from immemorial, the Yimkhiung community has been living harmoniously with the diversity of dialect. There is no difference; like many other Naga tribes, the Yimkhiung Naga tribe also spoke multiple home dialects. Thus, setting up a new village involves two or more dialects.”*<sup>44</sup> According to the Yimkhiung respondent, *“Yimkhiung ancestors had adopted these multiple dialects as their identity without having any issues since in those days, there was no such idea of identity and tribe among the ancestors. Hence, such a situation of multiple dialects exists even in other tribes. However, they live together harmoniously, the same as the Yimkhiung ancestors”*.<sup>45</sup> The opinion of the respondents is that *“From the beginning, like many other tribes of Naga, even the Yimkhiung community were also living with multiple home dialects until the NNC formed in the hills”*.<sup>46</sup> These opinions, mainly from the Yimkhiung respondents, suggest that initially, the Naga ancestors were identified only by the village, not the tribe; hence, the concepts of tribe, dialect, and identity are actually of recent origin.

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<sup>43</sup> Chuba H, aged 49, male, Yimkhiung govt employed, Mokokchung District

<sup>44</sup> Solumba, aged 35, male, yimkhiung, social activist, Shamator Town.

<sup>45</sup> Tsurito, aged 54, male, Yimkhiung, Abex bodies member, Shamator Town.

<sup>46</sup> Rijang, aged 72, Male, Yimkhiung, Gaonboru , Dimapur

However, Table 4.4 indicates that 34% of respondents were from the Tikhir community, except for one Yimkhiung respondent who stated that they disagreed with this point. Ancestors did not adapt to these multiple dialects, but lived together for many reasons and did not want to judge the past. One respondent narrated, " *From the beginning itself, ancestors did not adopt the idea of same or sharing identity. It was clear that communities had different origins. Still, they used to live together harmoniously since both depended on each other*". Another respondent from the Tikhir community narrated that " *Forebears did not adopt this multiple language as their identity. However, communities have still lived together in harmony without issues since their time, as their needs and purposes have differed from those of today. They were of different origins and had been together for a long time due to religious acts, which encouraged a positive mindset between communities after knowing the differences in their history of origin, language, and culture*".<sup>47</sup> One of the farmer respondents from the Tikhir community narrated that, " *Old time was different. Their understanding was to have peace and harmony between the two dialect groups. Thou formation identity knows them*".<sup>48</sup> These opinions suggest that most Tikhir respondents believed the two communities did not share the same identity. Still, peace between the people existed since the communities lived independently and were self-sufficient. Both Communities were prioritised for safe shelter and sufficient resources, which is why the rise of ethnicity and identity was a new concept for them.

Lastly, in Table 4.4, it is also indicated that six per cent of respondents have not responded to the dialect adaptation of the community, as they believed there were no reliable persons to share information, especially regarding their community origin and language issues. One of the Tikhir youth respondents narrated, " *My answer is neither Yes nor No. We cannot blame the past; our Ancestors lived in peace, but culture changes gradually with time, and bonding starts to be lost due to unnecessary issues*".<sup>49</sup> A Tikhir student respondent said, " *Transferred in another town with his other siblings for studies, and we do not frequently visit home, which makes us lose attachment to the village (in the Nokla district). So, this is the reason for less*

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<sup>47</sup> Avi, aged 22, female, Tikhir, student, Shamator village

<sup>48</sup> John, aged 38, male, Tikhir, farmer, Kiusam town

<sup>49</sup> Hanjomong, 22 years old, Male, Tikhir, unemployed youth, Kiphire district.

acquired information of the incident and fewer updates of their home village”.<sup>50</sup> This reflects that many youth are found to be unaware of this issue due to the age-generation gap, and also living in a safe atmosphere, who have never experienced such violence. As a result, some youth are less bothered by their ethnic history.

**Table 4.5: Language and Ethnic Identity**

Response	Community	Profile of Respondents						
		Employee	Church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	10(7)	2(2)	6(5)	11(8)	4(3)	5(4)	38 (28)
	Tikhir	1(1)	3(2)	10(7)	13(10)	2(2)	10(7)	39 (30)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11(8)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>16(12)</b>	<b>24(18)</b>	<b>6(5)</b>	<b>15(11)</b>	<b>77 (58)</b>
No	Yimkhiung	7(5)	2(2)	2(2)	6 (5)	1(1)	1 (1)	19(14)
	Tikhir	6(5)	1(1)	6(4)	7 (5)	1(1)	8 (6)	29(22)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13(10)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>13(10)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>9(7)</b>	<b>48(36)</b>
Do not Know	Yimkhiung	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	4 (3)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0 (0)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>6(4)</b>	<b>8 (6)</b>
<b>Category-wise Total</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(28)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(22)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages.

Table 4.5 presents the respondents' opinions on the relationship between language and identity. The analysis highlights the role of language in shaping identity among the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities. It was found that the majority (58%) of respondents believed that language helps preserve the identity of their community. They believed that language is an integral part of their culture and a source of their own identity. One of the respondents narrated that “*Tekhiyu (Tikhir dialect) language has the source connected with all living culture and is solely based on the living style, which includes a festival, traditional culture, and cultural attire*”.<sup>51</sup> One of the youth respondents said that “*Language defines somebody's ethnicity and identity*”.<sup>52</sup> One of farmer respondent from the Tikhir community said that “*Language is a social culture of tribe and it generation origin is solely based on*

<sup>50</sup> Albert, age 21, Male , Student , Tikhir, Kohima district .

<sup>51</sup>Tokim, aged 61, male, Tikhir, Village council members, Kiusam.

<sup>52</sup>A05, aged 25, female, Tikhir unemployed youth, Kiphire town.

*language*".<sup>53</sup> As narrated by one Yimkhiung respondent believes that "*Language is the only way to serve Yimkhiung identity, without language, there will be no identity. Moreover, six dialects within the Yimkhiung tribe stand for the Yimkhiung identity.*"<sup>54</sup> Opinion of another Yimkhiung respondent that "*language is the only way to pressure Yimkhiung identity. In life where there is no language, there is no life. Language is a source of our identity in many aspects of life, such as folk songs and dances, and it reveals our identity through our language.*"<sup>55</sup> This suggests that language is inseparable from culture and ethnicity, and is a primary factor in identity. Therefore, language helps forge one's own identity.

It was found that 36 % of the respondents disagreed on the point. They opined that not only the language but also the history of origin and culture play a major role in community and help to empower their identity. According to the narration of one Yimkhiung respondent and who also suggested that "*Unity within the community and preserving traditional culture to honour one's past keeps history alive and helps shape who we are today. It provides insight into where we may go, fostering the spirit of oneness and embracing diversity within a community to help strengthen its identity.*"<sup>56</sup> Another respondent from the Yimkhiung community said that "*Language to preserve one identity, we cannot stick only to one factor, but rather bring all the traditions, practices, culture and socio-economic factors under one hub*".<sup>57</sup> The opinion of one farmer respondent was that "*Language alone does not play the role of preserving identity, even traditional practices like history, festival, culture, traditional folk dance and marriage practices are also important factors in identity.*"<sup>58</sup> The finding shows identity is defined through traditional culture, and one should be given more priority than language because preserving community stories and culture helps to empower and preserve one's own identity.

Lastly, six per cent of respondents from both communities had not responded. Here, the respondents were primarily youths who did not respond because they thought they were not

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<sup>53</sup>Athong aged 52, Male, Tikhir, farmer , Kiusam

<sup>54</sup> Asangla aged 31, female, a farmer, Yimkhiung, Shamator District.

<sup>55</sup>Tsurito, aged 54, Male, Yimkhiung, govt employee, Shamator

<sup>56</sup>Dr. Rijingkhum, aged 45, Male, Yimkhiung, govt lecturer, Mokokchung District.

<sup>57</sup>Amongba, aged 34, Male, Yimkhiung, Govt teacher, Shamator town

<sup>58</sup>Tokiu Tikhir, aged 42, Male, Tikhir, farmer, Shamator village.

reliable people to share this matter with, and also, they tried to remain neutral out of fear of misinformation. Another reason is that they have less knowledge, as mostly graduated youth and students are far from the village and lose contact with the village situation. Some young people are unaware due to the generation gap, and others do not respond because they are reluctant to share their opinions, as it is not safe to disclose anything related to ethnic issues. They generally want to keep the inside story of the conflict private, fearing misquoting it.

**Table 4.6: Politics and Ethnic Conflict**

Response	Community	Profile of Respondents						
		Employee	church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	8(6)	3(2)	4(3)	12(9)	5(4)	1(1)	33(25)
	Tikhir	3(2)	1(1)	1(1)	3(2)	1(1)	8(6)	17(13)
	Total	<b>11(8)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>15(11)</b>	<b>6(4)</b>	<b>9(7)</b>	<b>50(38)</b>
No	Yimkhiung	9(7)	1(1)	4(3)	5(4)	0(0)	5(4)	24(18)
	Tikhir	4(3)	3(2)	15(11)	17(13)	2(2)	10(7)	51(38)
	Total	<b>13(10)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>19(14)</b>	<b>22(17)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>15(11)</b>	<b>75(56)</b>
Do not know	Yimkhiung	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)
	Total	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>6(4)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>
<b>Category-wise Total</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 4.6 explains the people's perceptions that ethnic conflict is primarily a political issue or due to other reasons. It was found that 38% of respondents from both communities believe that the identity crisis within the community is due to political issues. Interestingly, the majority of these respondents belong to the Yimkhiung tribe, which undermines the cause of the Tikhir tribe's demand for a separate identity. One of govt employees from Yimkhiung respondent narrated that " *In my understanding, it is strongly associated with politics because stakeholders are manipulating many for their political favours and personal gain*".<sup>59</sup> One of the youth respondents narrated that " *Political is the reason for this crisis in my community. If manipulation of politics had not existed from the very beginning, then we should have gone*

<sup>59</sup> Dopong, aged 32, a male, Yimkhiung, govt employee, Shamator district.

*far beyond in development and progress*".<sup>60</sup> One of the respondents from the Yimkhiung community narrated that *"identity crisis is political; it manifests the nature of political interest by masquerading in identity crises"*.<sup>61</sup> One of the Tikhir respondents narrated that *"Through politics that leaders have played by making excuses for such ethnic issues to gain their power"*.<sup>62</sup>

However, in the same table, 4.6 indicates that the majority (56%) of the respondents do not agree that politics is the major reason behind the conflict between them. Interestingly, the majority of the respondents are from the Tikhir community. These respondents opined that the minority community was deprived of their rights and also had no support from the government to develop the socio-economic infrastructure. At the same time, other groups were seen as fulfilling and securing a new politico-administrative structure within the community. The sense of alienation and neglect had driven the community's demand for a separate identity. One respondent from the Yimkhiung community had narrated that *"The crisis among the community is purely on recognition of identity by a certain dialect-speaking group. The claim of their identity developed when the elite aroused a division among the nationalist leader for different ranks in their organization"*.<sup>63</sup> Another Yimkhiung respondent also narrated that *"This misunderstanding began before 1975, so it shows that politics is not involved because political activities were not in practice that early in our community"*.<sup>64</sup> Opinion of one respondent from the Tikhir community that *"It was not political issues but due to differences in understanding and treatment that we received from the other community"*.<sup>65</sup>

Another respondent from the Tikhir community narrated that *"Minority communities had no representative in the political system, which made it difficult for them to fight for their rights. At the same time, neighbouring tribes encroached by taking advantage of their weakness"*.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Dokhim, aged 25, female, Yimkhiung, unemployed youth, Kohima district.

<sup>61</sup> Dr.Rijingkhum, aged 45, a male, Yimkhiung, a govt lecturer, Mokokchung district.

<sup>62</sup> James, aged 25, a male, Tikhir, student apex member, Kohima district

<sup>63</sup> Tsuyihba, aged 41, male, Yimkhiung, Tribal Apex member, Shamator District

<sup>64</sup> Dolen, aged 25, Male, Yimkhiung, entrepreneur, Dimapur.

<sup>65</sup> Joseph, aged 64, Male, Tikhir, Village chairman. Shamator Village.

<sup>66</sup>Tokim, aged 61, a male, Tikhir, tribal Apex member, Kiusam- Kiphire District .

One youth respondent narrated that *“Identity crisis is not associated with politics but due to inhospitable treatment, which has torn apart the community into conflict”*.<sup>67</sup>

One of the government employees of the respondent said that *“No, not political, but identity crisis is associated with the land issue”*.<sup>68</sup> Another govt employee of the respondent narrated that *“It cannot be termed as the making of the political outcome, because many issues are involved in the crisis, like land issues, dialect and for the recognition of the tribe separately”*.<sup>69</sup> One of the youth respondents from the Tikhir community narrated that *“The identity crisis problem with the Tikhir community is not related to politics, but the main reason is the absence of concern and contribution by another group towards the minor group, which has turned into bitterness and violence”*.<sup>70</sup> This suggests that politics do not primarily drive ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir, but rather various factors, including dialect diversity, unclear boundaries, and leadership crises. Other causes of major clashes between the communities include the absence of governmental support, misunderstandings, and hostile treatment, which have torn the community apart in conflict.

Lastly, six per cent of respondents from both communities did not respond to the related political issues. One of the student respondents said, *“We had heard about it but are not exactly sure what the cause of conflict between communities is; maybe it is an ancient incident. College students and youth are mostly away from the village for higher studies and do not visit home frequently, which tends to cause a loss of attachment to the village situation.”*<sup>71</sup> Mostly the youth and student respondents had not shared any views due to the generation gap, as youngsters do not know their history. Another reason is the fear of misinformation and the need to prevent coding the wrong history. A few other respondents declined to share their views, said that they were restrained by the community, and no information should be shared without any proper permission from the community leaders.

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<sup>67</sup> Shiuthong, aged 27, a male, Tikhir. Student apex member, Shamator village.

<sup>68</sup> Suthong, aged 33, Male, Tikhir, govt employee, Mon

<sup>69</sup> Among, aged 34, males, Yimkhiung, govt employee, Shamator town

<sup>70</sup> Yanruikiu, aged 30, Tikhir, student apex member, Shamator village.

<sup>71</sup> Albert Tikhir, 21 years old, male, Student, Tikhir, Kohima district.

The Yimkhiung and Tikhir ethnic conflict evolved from an earlier sense of subordination and neglect by the wider Pan-Yimkhiung community into one of economic backwardness, lack of development, social exclusion and electoral deprivation. The critical trigger in intensifying the identity struggle was that Tikhir sub-tribes saw themselves as not benefiting equally from state development programs, which caused feelings of insecurity and hatred towards the Yimkhiung family. The Tikhir dialect drifted little from the original language and evolved into a distinct dialect over time. In the various dialects between the Langa (Yimkhiung language) and Tikhir (a minority linguistic group), the linguistic affinity is still discernible today.

Language has become a crucial determinant of identity politics in multi-ethnic and multilingual societies. On the one hand, the core communities in such societies have used their language as a hegemonic instrument to subjugate the peripheral communities. On the other hand, this has led to counter-mobilisation by the latter for the protection of their distinct linguistic identity. This phenomenon has manifested in the demand of endangered communities for new territorial units to assert their linguistic rights in northeast India (Gupta et al., 2016, p. 1). Language is, however, not only the means of communication; it has also been an object of conflict between various Naga ethnic groups. It creates social cleavages similar to those created by religion and caste (Kumar, 1996, p. 21).

In the process, language has become a vital tool to subjugate a minor ethnic group by more prominent and more robust dominant groups. In these states, the tribal languages have little scope for growth. The Yimkhiung script in the Langa dialect was used by every Yimkhiung, including the Tikhir people, in the past. Langa dialect is the most commonly used language in Yimkhiung literature and is used for all official purposes. The Tikhir community voluntarily adopted the Yimkhiung language to express their ideas to one another. However, the minority dialect became weak due to the greater use of the major dialect. It is very favourable towards English, which they enjoy like their mother tongue, and they consider it useful for almost all purposes.

Yimkhiung has also established its literature committee, which is expected to promote language development. So far, the Yimkhiung Language is not taught in schools and higher classes but is used only for religious literature (Borubo) purposes. The dominant languages of the geographical areas became compulsory under the Shamator circle. Langa dialect is the dominant language for the Yimkhiung tribe and has eventually developed into a 'lingua Franca, which is commonly used to communicate among various ethnic groups. However, Tikhir dialect tribals cannot write, and some do not speak dominant languages because of the unfamiliar script. Tikhir people learn fluent Langa dialect, a dominant language of the Yimkhiung tribe, but continue to communicate with family at home in their Tikhir dialect; Langa (Yimkhiung dialect) generally becomes the home language, and their heritage tongues disappear. The growth of Western education in their area reflects the growing consciousness among the Tikhir ethnicity.

Moreover, side by side, some selfish people took advantage of the situation, and even the benefits and necessities are exaggerated by the so-called elites of these minority ethnic groups to corner scarce resources in their interest. Thus, the so-called categorisation of ethnic minorities has often been manipulated by their elites to gain political positions. These factors have made tribal consciousness more concentrated on protecting their culture on the way to asserting Tikhir identity in society, which has brought about a new dimension in cultivating the Tikhir language. To catch the attention of the government and fulfil their demand, they sometimes resorted to violent means.

Some respondents revealed that the reason for the language role of family appeared to play a massive role in how language played a part in ethnic belonging. The informants experience ethnic and cultural disconnect due to adopting and assimilating themselves to the norms of the dominant community and not communicating with their dialect, resulting in the loss of their heritage language. Farmers and village elders believed that language acted as an instrument that allowed for the maintenance of commonness and the discovery of tradition, culture, and language. Parents and elders want their children and grandchildren to speak their dialect to overcome a generational language barrier by being proficient and fluent in their heritage language (Tikhir dialect). By overcoming this language barrier, future generations

will be able to achieve a sense of ethnic belonging by connecting with their ethnic heritage and, ultimately, self-identify with their ethnic identity.

**Major factors for community conflict:**

The conflict between Yimkhiung and Tikhir has multiple reasons, but several major factors contribute to the ethnic conflict among diverse ethnic groups. The historical origin of the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga communities is diverse ethnic groups that have been living together generation after generation, with distinctive historical and structural settings. As a result, they have been struggling for upliftment based on their ethnic distinctiveness, and for this reason, they indulge in identity movements and fight for separate tribes. Thus, here the theory of primordialism provides a suitable explanation for the causes of ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes. They try to be distinct from communities, and the concept of others was developed in response to this. Other factors include economic underdevelopment, which can lead to ethnic conflict due to unequal structural conditions. In Nagaland, the advent of Christianity brought modern, progressive education and increased awareness about social and civic life. It also sowed the seeds of interest and love for one's tribe. The influence of Christianity and the spread of modern education reached the Tikhir people relatively late, not until the 1950s. Due to isolation and general backwardness, the tribal feeling fermented very late among the Tikhir community. When the Nagas as a whole were undergoing a period of transition from "darkness to light," the Tikhir were caught entirely unaware of the progressive changes taking place around them, which brought feelings of alienation and hostile relations among the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes. The eastern region is one of the underdeveloped districts of Nagaland. Uneven pace of development, scarce economic resources, political stability, unemployment, and socio-cultural and linguistic status of the people. As a result, various members of the Tikhir tribe have become aware, and due to a fear of losing their own distinctive linguistic, cultural, and ethnic identity, they have asserted themselves through identity movements. Therefore, ethnic groups like the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga tribes have emerged into constant conflict with each other and even with the government for their economic deprivation and demand for separation from the Yimkhiung tribe.

Another reason is the perception of culture, which involves not accepting or denying one's own culture and dialect by another ethnic tribe. A brotherly attitude and treatment were not shown, and they became the victim. These kinds of perceptions have led to conflicts between ethnic groups based on linguo-cultural distinctiveness, which has emerged as a significant reason behind the rise of identity assertion movements. Additionally, the spread of modern education was a significant factor contributing to ethnic conflict. In the later years, the Tikhir tribe gradually realised their rights and started a forward movement to preserve their identity and regain their lost right to live as Naga citizens in a democratic country. The emergence and expansion of modern education among the youth raises identity consciousness and play a role in mobilising people and making them aware of their situation, which also often leads to increased identity consciousness. To protect their own distinctive socio-cultural linguistic identity, a sense of ethnic identity movement and consciousness emerged among the minority group, which furthered the growth of the identity movement in the Tikhir dialect community. Gradually, the unresolved economic anxiety began to take on a political dimension. The atmosphere of neglect and indifference expedited the withdrawal process further. The hurt sentiment of the minority group realised that, without political power, no malady could be remedied, and for this reason, bargaining for political power began. Here, the constructivist theory also offers a more comprehensive explanation for the ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes. Thus, all these factors led to the emergence of conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir in Nagaland.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ETHNIC CONFLICT**

The rise of regional conflicts based on ethnic identities has become a persistent problem worldwide. Conflicts often arise from historical injustice and the marginalisation of ethnic groups. Especially militant organisations work to advance the interests of ethnic groups by posing threats to state officials, but also bring hostilities with other ethnic groups, which result in attacks and casualties (Das, 2019, p.230). ‘In most cases, the ethnic conflicts resulted in violence, homicide, and destruction of property, as witnessed in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Myanmar, India and Ethiopia, and significant losses of civilian lives, as recorded in Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka’ (Tambiah, 1989, p.337). Ethnic conflicts are the sheer misery they create: people are killed, tortured, maimed, and raped; they suffer from displacement, starvation, and disease. Ethnic conflicts have dire consequences, and not all of them occur on an equal scale everywhere. As described by the International Crisis Group, riots broke out in 1988-1994 between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which forcibly displaced over 700,000 Azeris and destroyed their belongings (2005, pp.3-7). Thus, ‘the social scientists need to conduct in-depth studies on ethnic conflict to understand its causes and how it can be prevented, managed, and resolved’ (Cordell & Wolff, 2011, pp.1-6).

Northeast presents striking socio-cultural features regarding ethnicity, language, and socio-cultural practices. As a result, there has been ethnic assertion in every group of its socio-cultural and political aspirations. For example, Borgohain & Sinha (2014) described the relationship between the Garo and Rabha, “for centuries, both communities have been living in peace and have been interdependent with each other. The riots have broken the historical continuity between the two tribes” (p. 80). Ethnic conflict in the northeast region has become endemic since independence. India's Northeast has been sharply on the rise in population displacement from ethnic conflict since 1980. Even as late as the 1970s, the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities lived together in harmony; however, by the 1980s, ethnic violence had ended the relationship between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes (Belho, 2022, pp. 18-19). As a result of the ethnic conflict that impacted all socio-economic aspects, communities have not been able to enjoy the state's economic potential and experience a

relatively reasonable standard of living compared with other tribes that got statehood in December 1963, around the same time. Sometimes, mobilising people along ethnic lines, community leaders tend to accuse other communities of their economic and social backwardness. The accused tribes also do the same thing to get mobilised. As a result, the sporadic conflicts spread to the entire region, leading to a lack of development in the conflict-affected areas.<sup>72</sup> Conflict within a society can cause members to become frustrated if they feel as if there is no solution in sight. As a result, people become stressed, adversely affecting their social and cultural lives.

During the conflict, both Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities suffered; their properties were destroyed; houses, furniture, utensils, horticulture gardens, etc., were burnt. Hundreds of people were rendered homeless, and many hundreds fled to safer areas. It led to the loss of lives, the displacement of people, and the destruction of property. Hundreds of people were injured, children orphaned, and women widowed. The conflict occurred in the same kitchen between the brothers, relatives and families of the same blood. Displacement led to the deeply felt need for security and consolation among the people, and the process also caused severe trauma. Ethnic Conflict led to violence and the displacement of Yimkhiung and Tikhir, leading many families to migrate involuntarily and take shelter in a nearby village for one night. However, during the crisis, neither Yimkhiung nor Tikhir received any kind of assistance or relief camp from the government. The significant impact of this conflict was a complete breakdown of trust and social cohesion among the affected communities.

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<sup>72</sup> Report on inter-tribal conflict and its impact on women and child, AIRSC.

**Table 5.1: Fear of Ethnic Conflict:**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						
		Employee	church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	6(4)	1(1)	3(2)	10(8)	5(4)	3(2)	27(20)
	Tikhir	3(2)	1(1)	9(7)	7(5)	1(1)	14(11)	34(26)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9(7)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>12(9)</b>	<b>17(13)</b>	<b>6(4)</b>	<b>16(12)</b>	<b>61(46)</b>
No	Yimkhiung	11(8)	2(2)	5(4)	7(5)	0(0)	4(3)	29(22)
	Tikhir	4(3)	3(2)	7(5)	13(10)	2(2)	5(4)	34(25)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15(11)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>12(9)</b>	<b>20(15)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>10(7)</b>	<b>63(47)</b>
Can't say	Yimkhiung	1(1)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	2(2)	5(4)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	2(2)	4(3)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>9(7)</b>
<b>Total in category-wise</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

This 5.1 Table tries to explain whether the community is still in fear due to past violent incidents between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir. It was found that 46 per cent of the respondents have a fear of violence between Yimkhiung and Tikhir since the issues of ethnic identity and land have not been reconciled. One student respondent from the Tikhir community narrated that, *“I fear that if conflict happens again, we will lose the lives of an innocent and hinder the growth of the community.”*<sup>73</sup> Another student respondent also said, *“I am afraid to end up in life without solving this conflict. Unless ethnic issues stop, we cannot see our future.”*<sup>74</sup> As narrated by farmer respondents of the Tikhir community, *“Since the Tikhir community has been fighting for decades for the demand of separate identity from the government to grant, we have fear that other community comes with another demand and find a excuse to fight to each other since is a long struggle we want to be in peace and quality life”.*<sup>75</sup> Another farmer respondent narrated that *“Ethnic violence experience is lingering in the memory and keeps us in trauma and still have fear for the conflict since in the past we all had gone through a lot in many ways. The fear for education loss, development and leaving in uncertain state*

<sup>73</sup> AO3 aged 23, Male, Tikhir, Student, Kiphire

<sup>74</sup> A017, aged 24, Male, Tikhir, Student, Kiphire

<sup>75</sup> A022, aged 56, Female, Tikhir, farmer, Shamator village.

*of mind to other unknown place, leaving all their properties house and land to run to other village for safe live”.*<sup>76</sup>

One of the former apex member respondents from Tikhir has narrated that, “The Community are still afraid of the conflict since the issue with the land owner is not reconciled, so once the community is divided, then it is obvious that the peaceful atmosphere will be contaminated”.<sup>77</sup> Opinion by one respondent that “It is a long agitation and demand to the government since 1980, so we are worried if our Tikhir remain unsolved and their identity demand is not fulfilled”.<sup>78</sup> One of the respondents from the Yimkhiung community narrated that “My fear is that if our society continues the same violence and issues, the community will not progress, and the economy will continue draining, which will result in a *lack of development and many problems, like poverty and unemployment*”.<sup>79</sup> Another Yimkhiung respondent said, “I have that fear until and unless the Yimkhiung tribal council and the government of Nagaland solve *this problem at the right time, even in the next generation, it will keep on repeating the same history that we already faced.*”<sup>80</sup> The analysis findings show that due to past violence experienced, many individuals, especially in affected villages, are still in fear for their safety, survival, and losing their properties again. Both the community of Yimkhiung and Tikhir are worried about the cycle of ethnic violence, as it results in declining growth and scarce resources. The minority Tikhir dialect-speaking group is concerned about assimilation into the dominant language and hegemony, as they are relatively weak compared to the majority. Communities are also in a state of tension and dilemma if they are unable to meet the demand from the government because of the opposite community. Thus, it reveals that ethnic conflict had caused trauma and anxiety in their memories in many forms.

However, Table 5.1 indicates that 47 per cent of the respondents report having no fear. Few interviews have taken place after Tikhir was officially recognised as a Tribe by the

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<sup>76</sup> Tokiu Tikhir, aged 42, male, Tikhir, farmer, Shamator village.

<sup>77</sup> Thothong, aged 76, Male, Tikhir, Former tribal apex member, Shamator.

<sup>78</sup> Kiusomong, aged 69, Male, Tikhir, Govt employee, Shamator village.

<sup>79</sup> Dopong, aged 32, Male, Yimkhiung, Govt employee, Shamator town.

<sup>80</sup> Rosy, aged 27, Female, Yimkhiung, Pvt employee kohima

government, which resulted in a major shift in the opinions of the respondents in this matter, especially concerning the Tikhir respondents. One Tikhir respondent said that “We have no fear since there is no reason, our biggest issues have come to an end by recognising as a Tikhir tribe officially”.<sup>81</sup> Another Tikhir respondent said that, *“The Community was in post-traumatic stress due to ethnic issues for many decades, but now the government has shown fair justice towards us by fulfilling our Tikhir demand”*.<sup>82</sup> Opinion from the respondent that *“I have no fear, many issues can be solved by hard work, not by fear”*.<sup>83</sup> Narrated by one respondent from the Yimkhiung community that, *“we have fear, as time change and people broaden their horizon, conflict in our region is subsequently diminishing. In the past decades, we had not faced major conflict within our tribe itself”*.<sup>84</sup> Another Yimkhiung respondent also mentioned that *“No fear, with the modernisation, there is less conflict in comparison with the 1990 era”*.<sup>85</sup> A teacher respondent narrated that *“There is no reason to fear since issues between communities for a decade and either of the communities has been struggling with the causes and Yimkhiung looks for unity, just like Tikhir want peace, therefore we still respect and understand each other”*.<sup>86</sup>

Around seven per cent of respondents had not responded, and the reason is that ethnic issues keep many minds in a dilemma. One of the respondents said, *“I cannot say either of this, yes/no, but hopefully, it is not going to happen again; nevertheless, we are not completely at peace until the issues are solved permanently.”*<sup>87</sup> One respondent narrated that *“We worry for the future of our younger generation, mostly living in rural areas where there are no basic facilities for health and good educational institutions; their futures are at stake.”*<sup>88</sup> This study shows that respondents are worried about the upcoming generation if issues cannot be solved permanently. These findings suggest that many are still in a dilemma, as

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<sup>81</sup> Akhang.T aged 70, Male, Tikhir, Former tribal apex member, Dimapur

<sup>82</sup> Rose, aged 47 , Female , Tikhir, Govt employee, Kohima

<sup>83</sup> Suthong, aged 33, Male, Tikhir, Govt employee, Mon.

<sup>84</sup> Kumrila, aged 35, Female, Yimkhiung tribe, Lecturer, Shamator

<sup>85</sup> Solumba , aged 35, Male, Yimkhiung, tribal Apex member, Shamator town.

<sup>86</sup> Among, aged 34, Male, Yimkhiung, govt teacher, Shamator town.

<sup>87</sup> Khalen, aged 38, Male, Yimkhiung, church member Shamator town.

<sup>88</sup> Tsuyihba, aged 41, Male, Yimkhiung , tribal Apex member, Shamator town

ethnic issues have not been fully reconciled, and therefore, immediate government action is needed on this matter.

**Table 5.2: Impact on Family Income**

Response	Community	Profile of Respondents						
		Employee	Church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	14(10)	3(2)	6(5)	16(12)	5(4)	7(5)	51(38)
	Tikhir	4(3)	4(3)	14(10)	19(14)	3(2)	19(14)	63(47)
	Total	<b>18(13)</b>	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>20(15)</b>	<b>35(26)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>26(19)</b>	<b>114(86)</b>
No	Yimkhiung	4(3)	1(1)	2(2)	1(1)	0(0)	2(2)	10(7)
	Tikhir	3(2)	0(0)	3(2)	1(1)	0(0)	2(2)	9(7)
	Total	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>19(14)</b>
<b>Total in category-wise</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages.

Table 5.2 aims to explain to respondents the decline in family income resulting from ethnic violence in their communities. It was found that the majority of the respondents, 86 per cent of the respondents, believed and agreed that ethnic conflict hurt economic growth in the region, affecting both Yimkhiung and Tikhir people badly. The family income of both communities is primarily agrarian, and 90 per cent of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. The opinion of one respondent is that *“Ethnic conflict has impacted every aspect of our lives, and we Tikhir have struggled with silent cries since we cannot express feelings of being in poverty”*.<sup>89</sup> One of the respondents narrated that *“Our economy has the worst effect, which has brought lots of problems, families with no source of income due to poverty and some violent atmosphere. Families of the affected villagers were unable to carry out any activities because the movement was not safe, at any time, due to attacks from the enemy. So, the only option was to stay home until the situation normalised”*.<sup>90</sup> According to one respondent's narration, *“Ethnic violence has distracted the co-existence in life, many poor families have lost their daily earnings, and resources were used to manage. Due to loss of income and resources which cause lots of unexpected*

<sup>89</sup> Akhang.T, aged 70 , Male , Tikhir,, former tribal members, Dimapur.

<sup>90</sup> Ato, aged 43, Male, Tikhir , village council, Shamator Village.

*problems in the family*".<sup>91</sup> Another respondent also narrated that, "After the ethnic conflict raise between the communities in those particular areas many poor families have lost earning source and ongoing conflict had forced some family to transfer to safety place which was most challenging since leaving their home in certain with no resources. Even unable to support family needs due to lack of economy and at the same time living life without peace and good life".<sup>92</sup> One respondent also mentioned that "We, the Yimkhiung tribe, are mostly cultivators, so if we fail to harvest in time, then the entire year, we will live with less food since we do not have another earning job other than agriculture."<sup>93</sup> Another respondent views that "Ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung began a very long time ago during the initial period of no development, no other business except agrarian cultivation in every household. If agriculture had been stopped, then there would be no other work, so even if transferred to a village during the conflict time, there was no way and less chance of changes in occupation. So, imagine the lives of those affected by a conflict situation, and their struggle".<sup>94</sup> The study found that the economic situation in conflict-affected areas/villages became poor after the conflict. In the rural areas, most farmers depend only on the land, but due to violence, cultivation also could not continue regularly, which resulted in a decline in crop production. Many farmers in affected areas have a decline in crop production due to irregular cultivation, which results in rising poverty and falling behind in every way, including work, children's education, failure to support families, and decline in sustainable living, and end up begging others to help.

However, 14 per cent of the respondents said ethnic conflict did not impact their family income. It is found that most of these respondents were residents from different places and villages located far away from the conflict zone. One of the student respondents said, "My family didn't come across any difficulties since conflict had happened in some areas, so we didn't face many problems".<sup>95</sup> One respondent mentioned, "My family was not there at that time, and the incident happened in some particular areas which had less effect on the other

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<sup>91</sup> Athong aged 52, Male, Tikhir, farmer, kiusam Village.

<sup>92</sup> Ato Yim, aged 72, Male, Yimkhiung, farmer, Dimapur.

<sup>93</sup> Lunsola, aged 22, Female, Yimkhiung community, Student, Dimapur.

<sup>94</sup> Yanruikiu, aged 30 Male, Tikhir, student apex member, Shamator Village.

<sup>95</sup> Among aged 21, Male, Yimkhiung, Student, Shamator.

side”.<sup>96</sup> Here, it reflects that most of these respondents haven’t experienced the violence of ethnic conflict since their villages and towns are far areas.

**Table 5.3: Change of Occupation Pattern**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						
		Employee	Church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	4(3)	0(0)	5(4)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)
	Total	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>6(5)</b>
No	Yimkhiung	15(11)	4(3)	7(5)	16(12)	1(1)	4(3)	47(35)
	Tikhir	7(5)	4(3)	16(12)	15(11)	3(2)	17(13)	62(47)
	Total	<b>22(16)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>23(17)</b>	<b>31(23)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>21(16)</b>	<b>109(82)</b>
Do not know	Yimkhiung	3(2)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	5(4)	9(7)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	4(3)	0(0)	4(3)	9(7)
	Total	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>0(0%)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>9(7)</b>	<b>18(14)</b>
<b>Total in category-wise</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 5.3 shows that five per cent of the respondents, from both the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities, reported that their occupation was affected after the conflict. One respondent said, “*The violent atmosphere makes it impossible to continue normal daily activities like farming and rearing animals. He shifted to a temporary place near the village due to riots and converted to other occupations as daily wage work for the family's survival*”.<sup>97</sup> This indicates that livelihoods were affected after the conflict. Some families were left with nothing; rearing animals like pigs, chickens, and cows was lost or destroyed, and cultivation was even halted, resulting in a significant increase in daily wage labourers.

However, the majority of respondents shared the opinion that there has been no change in occupation patterns, despite communal conflict having brought them into a problematic situation. Primarily, villages rely solely on land and derive their daily sustenance from

<sup>96</sup> Aji, aged 37, Male, Yimkhiung, govt employee, Mokokchung

<sup>97</sup> Ato, aged 43, Male Tikhir, Village council members, Shamator village, Shamator

cultivation. Moreover, some respondents reported that after the conflict, their families temporarily relocated to a safer place, but their occupation patterns did not change. Another respondent narrated that, *“Communities are economically impoverished and depend fully on the land by cultivating. Even businesses are uncommon in their area, as most residents live in impoverished states with limited financial resources. So that is the reason for not changing the occupation pattern with most of the commoners after the community conflict in the Shamator area.”*<sup>98</sup> One respondent said, *“In the initial time of ethnic conflict between the communities, most families lived by the support of agriculture. Conflict has affected particular regions, so it was normal life and village use to continue with daily cultivation activities, there were changes in work pattern since it was manageable and less chance of switch to other work”*.<sup>99</sup> Views from the respondent that *“We Yimkhiung tribe are mostly cultivator so if we failed to harvest in time then the entire year live with less food since we don,t have other earning job then agriculture because in village our resource of living is from cultivation and not from other work source”*.<sup>100</sup> The findings indicate that most respondents who depend on agriculture as a source of livelihood did not change their occupations, as no alternatives were available to them.

It was found that the category of respondents under employees and youth is mainly comprised of government and private employees who work in other districts and lead a comfortable life. Youth respondents who live away from home for their studies and training. Here, it is evident that most of these respondents lived in unaffected areas and had not experienced violence in ethnic conflicts.

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<sup>98</sup> Rijang aged 72, Male Yimkhiung , Gaonbura, Dimapur.

<sup>99</sup> Yanruikiu, aged 30, Male, Tikhir, Student apex member, Shamator village .

<sup>100</sup> Lunsola ,aged 22, Yimkhiung , student, Dimapur.

**Table 5.4: Impact on Family**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						
		Employee	church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	14(10)	3(2)	6(5)	16(12)	5(4)	7(5)	51(38)
	Tikhir	4(3)	4(3)	14(10)	19(14)	3(2)	19(14)	63(47)
	Total	<b>18(13)</b>	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>20(15)</b>	<b>35(26)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>26(19)</b>	<b>114(86)</b>
No	Yimkhiung	4(3)	1(1)	2(2)	1(1)	0(0)	2(2)	10(8)
	Tikhir	3(2)	0(0)	3(2)	1(1)	0(0)	2(2)	9(7)
	Total	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>19(14)</b>
Can't, say	Yimkhiung	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
	Total	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>
<b>Total in category-wise</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 5.4 shows that 86% of respondents reported that the conflict has negatively affected the family structure. The impact upon the family due to community tension had adversely affected every aspect of life, and the worst had been experienced by those people who were from conflict areas. During the conflict, families had to temporarily relocate to other places for safety, often without safeguarding their homes and property. One of the youth respondents mentioned that *“The family had gone through from starvation to mental trauma due to the ethnic violence in their childhood”*.<sup>101</sup> Narration from one respondent that *“Those families who have gone through such a situation, so it was not that simple to restart all over again”*.<sup>102</sup> Another respondent mentioned that, *“In such a tense atmosphere, villagers were unable to do their daily activities freely, due to hostile relations, and due to ethnic differences, unable to travel with peace of mind.”*<sup>103</sup>

One respondent mentioned that *“Some families could not live together for many reasons and some families shifted to a safe place often”*.<sup>104</sup> Yimkhiung respondent narrated that *“Matrimonial bond within Yimkhiung and Tikhir becomes the issue, women from Tikhir dialect become insecure when married to other sub-dialects spoken, and likewise same goes*

<sup>101</sup> Lunsola , aged 22, Yimkhiung, Student, Dimapur.

<sup>102</sup> Aki, aged 25, female, Tikhir, Unemployed Youth, Kiphire District.

<sup>103</sup> A014, aged 25 male, Tikhir, unemployed youth, Kohima.

<sup>104</sup> Thothong aged 76 ,Tikhir, Tribal apex member , Shamator town .

for Yimkhiung”.<sup>105</sup> One of the Tikhir respondents also mentioned that “Ethnic conflict has deprived a bright future and many young ladies left with no options as it disturbs in many ways, her education, which leads to early marriage”.<sup>106</sup> Again, one respondent narrated that “Tribal conflict affects women, a morally kind of fear. Besides, many have become widows”.<sup>107</sup> Another respondent narrated that, “Communal tension between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir community affected relations among brothers and their long-time relations came to an end”.<sup>108</sup> One of the respondents said, “After the ethnic conflict broke out between the communities, many of the families could not leave together for many reasons, and some families shifted to safe places”.<sup>109</sup> This reflects that the family relationships and social ties between Yimkhiung and Tikhir have been weakening due to conflict. The husbands and wives from different warring communities became separated, and many sacrificed their wives on the altar of ethnicity. Thus, the ethnic conflict has destroyed the relations between the families of both the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes.

Thus, the ethnic conflict has destroyed the relations between the families of both tribes. The relatives of the common ancestor living in Tikhir village can no longer maintain bonhomie with the relatives of the same ancestor living in Yimkhiung villages. During the violent clashes, the Mobs began to attack either men or husbands from the opposing tribe. There were instances where mothers and their children were forced to run away for safety, abandoning their dead husbands who were brutally beaten. Wives became their husbands' enemies because they were from different ethnic groups. Marriages between these two opposing ethnic groups have become taboo.

It is revealed by the finding that ethnic clashes not only the burden of family responsibility but also the relation of the married couples in the community become an issue for women due to other sub-dialects. For this reason, couples were not safe to stay together, so they

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<sup>105</sup> Asangla , aged 31, female, Yimkhiung, Farmer, Tuensang

<sup>106</sup> A25, aged 38, female, Tikhir, Church worker, Kiphire.

<sup>107</sup> Throngso, aged 75, male, Yimkhiung, Head Dobashi, Shamator town.

<sup>108</sup> Yamlu , aged 49, Male, Tikhir, farmer, Shamator village

<sup>109</sup> Tothong, aged 76, male Tikhir, village council member, Shamator town.

separated and did not live together for many reasons. Hence, the marriage between sub-groups of the community is bothersome.

**Table 5.5: Impact on Women**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						
		Employ	church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	10(8)	2(2)	6(4)	14(11)	5(4)	5(4)	42(32)
	Tikhir	3(2)	2(2)	14(11)	12(9)	0(0)	13(10)	44(33)
	Total	13(10)	4(3)	20(15)	26(20)	5(4)	18(14)	86(65)
No	Yimkhiung	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>15(11)</b>
	Tikhir	4(3)	2(2)	2(2)	6(5)	2(2)	4(3)	20(15)
	Total	<b>11(8)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>9(7)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>35(26)</b>
I can't say	Yimkhiung	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	2(2)	1(1)	4(3)	8(6)
	Total	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>12(9)</b>
<b>Total in category-wise</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 5.5 tries to explain the impact of ethnic conflict on women, who are, in general, the primary victims of any conflict in society. Around 65 per cent of respondents were concerned about women / mental health and the struggle to manage their families during the communal tension. The physical and mental stress resulting from experiencing death, separation, torture, and destruction has primarily affected women in general. In Shamator village under Shamator district, most of the respondents suffered from nightmares. In some villages, the Kiphire is also a sufferer of this disorder. The physical and mental stress resulting from experiencing death, separation, and destruction has primarily affected women. Few female respondents shared that conflict had an impact on married women, education, and the rise of the weaker section of women. One respondent narrated that “*women became widowed and left homeless, who were not only wives but mothers and had to raise children and take care of the family's needs during such a violent situation. The conflict has caused women to become widowed, homeless and poor, which increases the weaker section*”.<sup>110</sup> This shows that communal clashes had a devastating impact on many mothers in the affected

<sup>110</sup> Samuel, aged 43 male, Tikhir, Pastor, Shamator village

areas; married women lost their husbands and were left homeless. Women or mothers had to manage other household chores even during community conflict. Many widowed mothers were compelled to run away with their children to another place in search of a safer place. The women in conflicting areas are less secure than men, and being a widow, she had faced lots of grief alone in such a conflict scenario since all the burden fell on her. She alone had to take on additional roles in the family, including finances and children. Due to ethnic clashes, many mothers faced difficulty managing and protecting their families. Education for women was depleted, and there was no hope of future goals due to ethnic clashes, since family responsibility became a priority for a daughter, which led to early marriage for girls. For this reason, young mothers between the ages of 17 and 20 are seen in many villages in Shamator.

However, 26 per cent of the respondents from both communities responded that ethnic conflict has no impact on women. Most of these respondents, who were employees and village elders, believed ethnic clashes had no adverse effect on Women. This might reflect the patriarchal dimension of social reality, where men, especially the leaders, try to hide such facts regarding women. It was reported that some families were immediately shifted to a relative's house in the nearby village during the community conflict and returned safely to the village after the situation ended. One respondent said, “*Men are responsible for keeping the family safe, while women look after their home and children. So far no such case of physical abuse, killed and rape of women in the village*”.<sup>111</sup> Some respondents noted that families were living on the other side of the village, so there was no disturbance, and the village remained safe during the communal tension. Instead, they helped families and women from the affected village.

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<sup>111</sup> Shulimkiu , aged 85, Tikhir, Head Goanbura - Shamator village.

**Table 5.6: Impact on Children**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						
		Employee	church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	12(9)	2(2)	6(4)	14(11)	5(4)	6(4)	45(34)
	Tikhir	5(4)	3(2)	14(11)	11(8)	0(0)	13(10)	46(35)
	Total	<b>17(13)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>20(15)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>19(14)</b>	<b>91(68)</b>
No	Yimkhiung	5(4)	2(2)	2(2)	3(2)	0(0)	0(0)	12(9)
	Tikhir	2(2)	1(1)	2(2)	7(5)	2(2)	4(3)	18(13)
	Total	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>10(7)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>30(22)</b>
Can't say	Yimkhiung	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	2(2)	1(1)	4(3)	8(6)
	Total	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>12(9)</b>
<b>Total in category-wise</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 5.6 explains the impact of ethnic conflict on the children's health and well-being. It is found that 68 per cent of respondents said that due to conflict, many children become victims in terms of mental health and personal aspects. It was found that a violent atmosphere affected mental health; children who had gone through such fear had lost concentration, which resulted in giving up going to school and inculcating a wrong attitude by not trusting and hatred in their minds. One respondent said, *“Yes, children grow up with a bad attitude due to the conflict. Most of the children in this generation hate each other just by hearing the names or the tribes name, without even knowing the actual reason”*.<sup>112</sup> One Govt employee respondent narrated, *“Yes, it is sad to know that young children have to go through such a situation where they see mess all around. Even though no one was there to explain what was happening. Violence and chaos have destroyed and shut children's minds”*.<sup>113</sup> Another govt employee respondent narrated that *“During the formative period, the children of main warring zones were traumatised in such a way that their educational career was also shut in the mind of the children”*.<sup>114</sup> Yimkhiung respondent also mentioned that *“yes, however, they are unaware of the type of crisis taking place”*. One of the respondents

<sup>112</sup> Asangla aged 31, Female , Yimkhiung, Farmer, Shamator

<sup>113</sup> Shahoto aged 43, male Yimkhiung, govt employee Mokokchung.

<sup>114</sup> Chuba aged 49, male, Yimkhiung, govt employee , Mokokchung.

narrated that *“children had suffered mentally, like fear and confusion, as narrated, ‘the children’s minds have been sabotaged irreparably. The children of the principal warring zones were traumatised in such a way that their educational career was also nipped in the bud. Further, the antagonistic feeling and hostility towards each other have been in the doctrine in the minds of the children of contending parties’”*.<sup>115</sup> It is found that children were stopped outdoors due to fear and insecurity among the parents. The violent atmosphere affected the concentration due to anxiety, loss of freedom and deprivation of their education. It is also found that some children lost their parents during the community conflict, and children become victims of the conflict. This orphan was compelled to stay at somebody’s home as a babysitter and forced into child labour, which is a prevalent issue in Nagaland.

It was found that 22 per cent of respondents shared that conflict did not affect children. One of the respondents said, *“Parents were taking care of all responsibilities, and children did not have any negative impact due to conflict”*.<sup>116</sup> Narration from one respondent that *“During such a situation, we keep children away from such a zone and allow them to stay and play around the house. Children were in a safe state and no death records so far”*.<sup>117</sup> One respondent said, *“Children are absolutely in a safe condition and have been taken care of by their parents. Some families did not affect on their children’s academics since schools were on winter break when the situation was tense”*.<sup>118</sup> The findings and analysis revealed that the no effects of conflict on the children academics was that they were mostly away from conflict zone areas, and primarily violent situations occur within boundaries, so there is less chance of getting affected. However, some parents who were poor and illiterate were never bothered by their children’s education and mental health. Financially stable parents transferred their children to another town to continue their studies without interruption.

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<sup>115</sup> Dr. Rijingkhum, male aged 45, Yimkhiung, a govt lecturer, Mokokchung.

<sup>116</sup> Hanjimong, aged 22, Tikhir, unemployed youth, Kiphire

<sup>117</sup> Samuel, aged 43, male, Tikhir, Church co-worker, Shamator village

<sup>118</sup> Rijang, aged 72 male, Yimkhiung, Gaonbura, Dimapur.

**Table. 5.7: Impact on Youth**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						
		Employee	Church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	16(12)	3(2)	5(4)	16(12)	5(3)	7(5)	52(39)
	Tikhir	6(4)	4(3)	15(11)	16(12)	2(2)	20(15)	63(47)
	Total	<b>22(16)</b>	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>20(15)</b>	<b>32(24)</b>	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>27(20)</b>	<b>115(86)</b>
No	Yimkhiung	2(2)	1(1)	2(2)	1(1)	0(0)	2(2)	8(6)
	Tikhir	1(1)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	3(2)
	Total	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>11(8)</b>
Can't Say	Yimkhiung	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	4(3)	1(1)	0(0)	6(4)
	Total	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>7(5)</b>
<b>Total in category-wise</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 5.7 explains the impact of ethnic conflict on the lives of youth in their community. It was found that 86 per cent of respondents from the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities believed that communal conflict had deprived them of a better future for the youth. Some of the respondents said education is a primary concern for youth. One of the respondents said that, “*Yes, this communal tension had an impact on the youth life of Yimkhiung in the educational field, mental health and deprivation in many ways. The violent atmosphere affects their studies, which treat untold problems with individuals, families and society as a whole. It disturbs their concentration aspects of life*”.<sup>119</sup> Another respondent narrated that, “*Yes, youth in the affected villages had experienced fear and violence due to some going through feelings of losing trust, negative thoughts and loss of freedom*”.<sup>120</sup> One respondent narrated that “*the conflict between the two had created hatred among the young people due to misconceptions suffered by both communities. Young minds have lots of misunderstandings about ethnicity, which makes it challenging to collaborate with another particular group like Tikhir*”.<sup>121</sup> According to respondent view that “*Ethnic conflict between the communities but it is limited to the area in concern and time, the strength and force of*

<sup>119</sup> Tsurito, aged 54, male Yimkhiung, govt employee, Shamator town

<sup>120</sup> Kiuthsang, aged 76, male Tikhir, Head gaonbura, Kiusam village.

<sup>121</sup> Rosy, aged 27, female, Yimkhiung, Teacher, Kohima.

*any given society is the youth, it affected their vision and thought pattern”*. Opinion of the respondent that *“This ethnic conflict has impact youth life in many ways like failed to received good education and failed to build good career and increase the unemployment”*.<sup>122</sup> One of the respondents mentioned that, *“ethnic conflict not only affected the economy but also destroyed many ways. Youth from the affected areas have experienced those who have lost their academic environment and security, which has discouraged many young people from having a bright future”*.<sup>123</sup>

It is sad to reveal by the findings that the conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga had adversely affected mental health, which developed insecurity and complexity in the mind, stress and fear, which have caused untold challenges for individuals. The feeling of insecurity and the complex social environment had failed them in many ways and disturbed their concentration in all aspects of life. It also causes injustice, discrimination and identity issues. Here, findings and analysis showed that the misconception narrows the mentality of the community, which makes it easy to trust. The small wound has gone so deep that it causes tribalism, where only the weaker and poorer sections of society have gone through such discrimination and injustice. Both sides fought continuously, and as a result, the government neglected and failed to assist in many ways. This shows that communal tension was between the elite, but the youth became victims of unemployment and were deprived of further studies due to the interruption. A violent atmosphere encouraged the young to join the militia, mobs and thieves. Many respondents believed that the future of the young generation would be a disaster unless they brought a solution between these two communities.

It was found that 11 per cent of respondents believed that communal tension did not impact youth. Instead, it had revealed a positive response. It said that after the conflict, they lost many things and suffered simultaneously, but it also strengthened the vision of the youth and encouraged them to work harder for a better future. According to the narration of one respondent, *“communal conflict in youth had encouraged more determination to fight and*

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<sup>122</sup> Asang, aged 48, female, Tikhir, Unemployed ,Kiphire .

<sup>123</sup> Mary ,aged 27 , female, Tikhir, unemployed youth, Kiphire.

*uplift their community name*".<sup>124</sup> Here is another positive response of the respondents, according to the narration of one respondent, 'It has been affected in many ways by ethnic conflict, but it did not take our young people's dreams; instead, it motivated us *to be firm and wise. Today, many Yimkhiung are securing the best academic performance, whether in school or higher studies, and many are making good progress.*<sup>125</sup> One of the respondents said, "*I have no regret since past wrong things have strengthened our young Yimkhiung vision more clearly and motivated them to work harder and fight the challenges for a better future*".<sup>126</sup> One of the respondents said that, "*even if the situation is worse, it all depends on the person how to take it, and it was a community issue, not a war, so less chance to get an impact*".<sup>127</sup> Opinion of the respondent that, "*Community issue had impact but now the younger generation are more into peace and they aware of the consequences caused by ethnic conflict, though there can be some other certain things may linger in their mind*".<sup>128</sup> Respondent narrated that "*It was but not anymore, young are more determined to fight and uplift own community name, put effort to change from worse to excellent*".<sup>129</sup> One of the respondent said that "*It has impact by ethnic conflict but didn't took our young people dreams instead it motivated more to be firm and wise. Today, many Yimkhiung are securing the best academic performance, whether in school or higher studies, and many are making good progress.*<sup>130</sup> These respondents are with a positive mindset, seeking no revenge for the past violent incidents that took place between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir. They want to be at peace by forgetting those past bad experiences since they don't want the rest of the generation to suffer like them.

The ethnic conflict severely affected the youth, especially the forerunners, during the formative period. Many youths in conflict-affected areas are less rational, lack goals, and are likely to make decisions first. This kind of violence has caused untold problems for individuals, families and society. The feeling of insecurity and the complex social

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<sup>124</sup> kumkiu aged 64, male, Tikhir village council member, kiusam

<sup>125</sup> Ato Yim, aged 72, Male, Yimkhiung, farmer, Dimapur

<sup>126</sup> Yimto, aged 76, male, Tikhir, farmer, Shamator village.

<sup>127</sup> Dolen, aged 25, male, Yimkhiung, private employee, Dimapur.

<sup>128</sup> Asangla aged 28, female, Yimkhiung, Teacher, Tuensang.

<sup>129</sup> Kumkiu aged 64, Male, Tikhir, village council member, Kiusam.

<sup>130</sup> Rijang aged 72, male, Yimkhiung, Gaonbura, Dimapur.

environment had failed them in many ways and disturbed their concentration in all aspects of life. Since there was no scope in the educational field, young men were motivated to join the army, and young girls kept their last choice in marriage. The Tikhir tribe were a minority group, and the strength and force of the dominant group had the worst impact and disturbed all aspects of life due to ethnic clashes. The conflict has caused them to lose their self-identity from the rest of society and live a life of insecurity. Such a violent environment influenced many Tikhir boys to leave their studies, take up weapons, and become militia fighters. Many youngsters gradually gave up their studies, and young people eloped or married without a plan or a job for their living. Unfortunately, this ethnic conflict deprived the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga youths of their fundamental rights and risked many young people's lives.

**Case study 1:** Among (pseudo name), aged 42, was a victim of the community conflict that broke out between Yimkhiung and Tikhir at Kiusam. He narrated how he suffered and was ill-treated by a violent mob during the ethnic clash when he was hardly seventeen years old at the time. In 1997, when riots broke out, mobs started damaging and dismantling houses in Kiusam town. He managed to escape from the mob, but now he is traumatised and afraid of the incident, which was so horrific to him. He always wanted to finish his higher education, but eventually became a victim of the ethnic conflict and gave up everything and stayed back in his village. He said he had experienced many challenges and struggles during his youth due to the ethnic conflict. Now he is married and has two sons. As soon as they complete their children's high school, he wants to send them to another place for higher education because they have every right to have a good education, which he could not pursue for himself due to the ethnic conflict.

**Table 5.8: Impact on social life**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						
		Employee	church workers	Farmer	Village Elders	Dobashis	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	16(2)	4(3)	6(5)	17(13)	5(4)	8(6)	56(42)
	Tikhir	6(5)	3(2)	15(11)	17(13)	2(2)	22(17)	65(49)
	Total	22(17)	7(5)	21(16)	34(25)	7(5)	30(23)	121(91)
No	Yimkhiung	2(2)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	4(3)
	Tikhir	1(1)	1(1)	2(2)	1(1)	0(0)	1(1)	6(5)
	Total	3(2)	1(1)	3(2)	1(1)	0(0)	2(2)	10(8)
Can't say	Yimkhiung	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	1(1)
	Total	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	2(2)
<b>Total in category-wise</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 5.8 explains the impact of ethnic conflict on the social life of communities. It was found that 91 per cent of the communities agreed with this point and shared that ethnic conflict had weakened the social relationships between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir. One of the respondent said, *“Ethnic conflict had badly impacted our social life and created feelings of fear, threatening, and killing, and also many were due to the situation that compelled them to hide their own identity for safety”*.<sup>131</sup> One respondent narrated that *“All activities of life have been badly affected. Now, the relatives of the common ancestor living in Tikhir villages can no longer maintain bonhomie with the relatives of the same ancestor living in Yimkhiung village.”*<sup>132</sup> View of another respondent that *“Ethnic conflict had opened ways to issues, and the entire Tikhir community has lost social morality and no support from other communities”*.<sup>133</sup> Respondent said that *“Ethnic conflict has greatly impacted the lives of people before, but now it is returning, and people are the rays of hope for the upcoming younger generation, a better relation and peaceful co-existence”*.<sup>134</sup> Another respondent also

<sup>131</sup> A1 aged 33, Male ,Tikhir, village council , Kiphire

<sup>132</sup> Dr.Rejengkhum, aged 45 male, Yimkhiung , govt lecturer, Mokokchung.

<sup>133</sup> Suthong aged 33, Male, tikhir, Govt employee ,Mon

<sup>134</sup> Tsuyihba aged 41 , Male, Yimkhkung, Tribal council member , Shamator

mentioned that *“Ethnic conflict had so much negative effect, like inferiority complex, fear and we are just confined within our group”*.<sup>135</sup> The results of data collection and analysis showed that the ethnic conflict had not only weakened the economy. However, it had an impact on all activities, including community relations.

The same table indicates, 19 per cent of the respondents disagreed that ethnic conflict impacts social relations. Since most respondents were from towns, working, earning, and living a peaceful life. Such respondents' responses are always neutral and quite positive.

**Table 5.9: Impact on Education**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						
		Employee	Church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	5(11)	1(1)	6(4)	16(12)	5(4)	6(4)	49(37)
	Tikhir	7(5)	4(3)	15(11)	20(15)	3(2)	17(13)	66(50)
	Total	<b>22(16)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>21(15)</b>	<b>36(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>23(17)</b>	<b>115(87)</b>
No	Yimkhiung	2(2)	3(2)	2(2)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	8(6)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	2(2)
	Total	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>10(8)</b>
Do not know	Yimkhiung	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)
	Total	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>6(4)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>
<b>Total in category-wise</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 5.9 explains the education scenario after the ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities. The study indicates that 87 per cent of respondents agreed that conflict badly affected the educational system in the local area. According to the narration from one respondent, *“The community is lacking in every field, but especially in education, since there are not many schools and higher secondary education institutions in our land. As a result, parents must send their children to faraway places to acquire quality education, but many farmers are unable to support their children's education. Hence, they used to send*

<sup>135</sup> John aged 38.Male, Tikhir, Farmer , Kiusam

them near our village towns. However, due to the tribal conflict, now they are afraid of sending their children to nearby towns".<sup>136</sup> This is why there was a generation gap and weakness in the educational system in the eastern areas of Nagaland. One respondent narrated that another "*Tribe threatened school children due to identity crises and took advantage without any genuine reason, which has seriously caused fear and mental abuse to younger people*".<sup>137</sup> One respondent narrated that "*naturally in a disturbed area so teachers or students cannot teach or studies, therefore, the institutions were forced to shut down. Although the schools were restored once the situation calmed down, no one wished to continue in such an environment; thus, every concern was laid back academically*".<sup>138</sup> Opinion of the respondent that "*During the ethnic conflict, especially Shamator village and Wapher village. We were subjugated in their identity, and innocents were beaten, harassed or even killed. Such an atmosphere led us to drop out of school and college. We are the victims unheard and unseen by the government. Children were threatened in schools*".<sup>139</sup> "Views of the respondent that "due to the violence situation, the school has been shut till things get back to normal". View of the respondent that "*The education system and facilities are far better in urban areas than in villages and rural areas. Many parents in the village sent their children to school with good hope, but it was sad that ethnic conflict hampered their entire way. Due to violence situation many childrens are at great loss because of migration*".<sup>140</sup> Response of the respondent that "*ethnic conflict situation has put fear and panic in person mind, teachers from other place refused to re-join the school until situation got into normal but this affect in academic, student lose interest going to school after a break due to situation, so this reason effect on education*"<sup>141</sup> Education is a critical institution that plays a significant part in society, but sadly, hundreds of children could not study cause of the violent atmosphere.

Since the inception of ethnic conflict, the performance of educational institutions and students has started to decline drastically. For this reason, many economically stable parents

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<sup>136</sup>Rosy, aged 27, female, Yimkhiung, pvt teacher, Kohima

<sup>137</sup> Akhang T, aged 70, is male, Tikhir, and a former tribal leader in Dimapur.

<sup>138</sup>Dr.Rejengkhum, aged 45 male, Yimkhiung,govt lecturer, Mokokchung.

<sup>139</sup> A013, aged 24, female, Tikhir,unemployee youth , Shamator village.

<sup>140</sup> Langtsuthong, aged 31, Male, Yimkhuiung, private teacher, Kiphire.

<sup>141</sup> Dolen aged 25, Male, Yimkhkung, private employee, Dimapur.

relocate their children to different locations, such as Kohima and Dimapur, to obtain a good education. The finding shows that the conflict has caused a generation gap in education standards among the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes compared to the others in the state. The community tension had hampered education to a large extent. The attack of villages between the adversaries disturbed the environment so much that while the children of their peer groups in other towns were pursuing education in peace of mind, the children of affected villages/areas were instead on the run for survival, completely stunting their education further, the mind of the warring groups were also engulfed with a vengeance without enough basic amenities of substances whereby many were compelled to give up studies. Many school and college students had dropped out, especially from Tuensang and Kiphire. The reasons behind dropping out of school and college are conflict, economic hardships, and communication problems. This has resulted in a significant loss of students in terms of education. There were threats and arrests if they disobeyed their orders. Out of fear of being targeted by violence, children were stopped from going to school by their parents, so many children were discouraged from continuing their studies.

However, eight per cent of respondents share that conflict did not affect education. The reason is that villages were away from conflict zone areas, and violent situations occur mainly within boundaries, so there is less chance of getting affected. Ethnic conflict has caused significant damage to the education system in this region and the rise of illiteracy, which paved the way for many evil practices like child labour, unemployment, poverty, weak economy, and early marriage.

### **Ethnic Conflict and Migration:**

Conflict in the Northeast is not new, "tribals and 'conflict' have coexisted in the northeast Indian region ever since Assam became a British colony (Brahma, 2019, p.7). Many innocent people, due to violence and insurgency, have been driven out of their homes. They even lost loved ones, their houses and household assets, which were hard-earned, were also lost, and many are damaged, like furniture, utensils and clothes, due to the conflict. The conflict between Yimkhiung and Tikhir also resulted in forced migration for many victim families to survive the violent attacks.

It is found that the ethnic conflict has resulted in killing, attacks, burning and destruction of the houses and forced the ordinary people to run away from their original place of settlement. Families had shifted to another place during the conflict, and a few families affected by the ethnic clashes moved to other villages and towns where there was some sense of security and opportunities for livelihood. However, many families who are mostly economically poor and fear losing their land decided to stay back in their original place, even during such a violent atmosphere. Most of these respondents depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Those people who left their native places during the conflict moved out in different directions without knowing their resting place and stayed at another village for a while. According to information gathered through the personal interviews from the respondents, caused of ethnic violence, many people have been internally displaced. Many young family members, after the community conflict, have shifted to other places, leaving their elderly parents at home in search of jobs and better lives. Many of these migrated to towns like Tuensang, Dimapur, Kohima, and Mokokchung, where there was a sense of security and more economic opportunities. Most of their community preferred to move from their place to towns in search of livelihood opportunities and to live in a new environment, which is free of violence and ethnic tension.

**Case study 2:** Yanchi, age 61; he is a government teacher residing in Kiusam town under Kiphire district from the Tikhir tribe, who is one of the victims of the community conflict that broke out between Yimkhiung and Tikhir at Kiusam. He narrated how his family suffered during such a difficult time. That was in the year 1997 when a riot happened suddenly, and the mob started damaging and burning houses in Kiusam town. The situation worsened, so the family left home without knowing any resting place and stayed overnight without food in the jungle. With much hardship, his family manages to reach his relative's village. And return to their place after the situation was normal. He said life was never easy to continue in such disturbed areas, but they could not leave their birthplace and land since no place to resettle and no other source of income. During the difficult situation, he was more

concerned about his children's education, so later in the year, he sent his children to the Kohima district so that their studies would not be affected.

**Case study 3:** Sorila Yimkhiung, a 48-year-old who is the mother of three children. She is a homemaker and also does some petty business in Kohima for survival. She left Kiphire town at a very young age without even completing her higher studies. She left her native place for safety since the onset of the conflict, she was forced to relocate to Kohima. At present, she does not have any plans of going back to her native place since she does not want her children to suffer and regret in later life like her. She is happy to have migrated here to Kohima; otherwise, she could not have such a good life. Of course, she misses her parents, but now she has her own family here in Kohima, which is more important to her.

**Case Study 4:** Akhum, aged 59, is from the Tikhir tribe and is a cultivator living in Kiusam town under Kiphire district, who is one of the victims of the ethnic conflict that broke out between Yimkhiung and Tikhir at Kiusam. He narrated about his family struggle during such a difficult time caused by ethnic conflict. He said that in the year 1997, when clashes took place in Kiusam town, the mobs started destroying whatever was around randomly. Before the situation got worse, he moved with his spouse to his parents' place in Mudonger village, which was 3 km away. His family spent a few weeks in their parents' home and later time decided to stay back in village since there is no point going back if the conflict situation continues, his family will end up in poverty. Also, going back to Kiusam town was quite risky since there was no security, and he depended on agriculture and no other job skills. This is the reason many families like Akhum had permanently settled in the migrated villages without shifting back to their old place, since relocating was very challenging, and they also had no job other than depending on agriculture. Now, he earns a living by doing multiple works; he earns by doing daily wage work as well as cultivation, depending on the season. He and his family are sustaining themselves with the support of agriculture. Now his priority is their children's future.

**Table 5.10: Ethnic Conflict as a barrier to progress**

Respond	Community	Profile of respondents						
		Employee	Church workers	Farmers	Village Elders	Dobashis	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	7(5)	3(2)	1(1)	2(2)	0(0)	2(2)	15(11)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	0(0)	2(2)	3(2)	8(6)
	Total	7(5)	3(2)	4(3)	2(2)	2(2)	5(4)	23(17)
No	Yimkhiung	2(2)	1(1)	3(2)	6(5)	5(4)	2(2)	19(14)
	Tikhir	6(5)	4(3)	12(9)	18(14)	1(1)	11(8)	52(39)
	Total	8(6)	5(4)	15(11)	24(18)	6(5)	13(10)	71(53)
Can't say	Yimkhiung	9(7)	0(0)	4(3)	9(7)	0(0)	5(4)	27(20)
	Tikhir	1(1)	0(0)	2(2)	0(0)	0(0)	9(7)	12(9)
	Total	10(8)	0(0)	6(5)	9(7)	0(0)	14(11)	39(29)
<b>Total in category-wise</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 5.10 explains the respondents' opinions on whether the community can progress without solving the ethnic conflict issue. Here, it indicates that 17 per cent of the respondents agreed that progress can be possible even without solving the past issues. One respondent said, “The Community can progress without solving this ethnic conflict because it's ongoing. We also continue to live and progress despite the issues.”<sup>142</sup> Another respondent's opinion was that “*the Community can manage progress by cooperation and understanding because community issues are lifetime problems, so let us not blame each other. We have lives and must continue going ahead since simply doing nothing and waiting for the ethnic conflict to end is a complete mistake.*”<sup>143</sup> Another respondent also narrated that “*Community can make progress and develop without solving this issue because any phenomenon that stays with humanity for quite some time, then humans become adaptive to the prevailing situation*”.<sup>144</sup> One respondent mentioned that “*Progress is possible since people's ways of thinking and lifestyle have changed, and people of this generation are giving in more to a peaceful life*”.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>142</sup> Rebecca aged 24 , female , Yimkhiung, unemployed youth, Dimapur.

<sup>143</sup> A6 aged 26 ,female , Tikhir, unemployed youth ,kiphire

<sup>144</sup>Dr.Rejingkhum aged 45 , yimkhiung, Govt lecturer , Mokokchung .

<sup>145</sup>Dorila , aged 38. female , Yimkhiung, Pvt employee, Kohima.

However, it reveals that 53 per cent of the respondents are disagree that progress in the community can be made without solving past issues. They think and believe that ethnic conflict is a serious matter; unless a solution is found to this matter, the community cannot do any further for development. One of the respondents narrated that *“It will never be easy to bring development without having a good relationship within the community, since without solving ethnic issues, how can the community look forward to other problems”*.<sup>146</sup> The respondent shared the opinion that *“Without solving ethnic issues, it is not possible to bring any good changes within the community because in every field we need peace and a feeling of harmony to develop and any progress”*.<sup>147</sup> Another respondent mentioned that *“Community cannot bringing any development unless thus ethnic issues come to an end and its serious and critical issue which need help of govt and competent individuals and is badly affecting the development of the area.”*<sup>148</sup> The opinion of one Tikhir respondent that *“Without reconciling to each other may be possible to bring any progress forward. Since at any point in time, from any side, there will be an attack or provocation”*.<sup>149</sup> Thus, the majority of the respondents opined that the conflict has badly affected the progress in the area.

It was found that the period 1981-2015 showed a total absence of development in physical infrastructure under the Kiphire and Shamator districts due to increasing violence in this region. There has been a climate of social and economic gloom and uncertainty about the future because of frequent threats of racial violence that frighten non-local investors and even discourage local businesses. Conflict leads to slower economic growth in a region and deteriorates the socioeconomic conditions of the population (Das, 2015, p. 82). The conflict has disrupted physical and social infrastructure, which stops economic growth and increases unemployment in the area. Economic growth and development in the conflict area have been lopsided for over four decades. Due to uneven development, people from this community are even compelled to move to other places for their livelihood. Some move for their study or

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<sup>146</sup> James aged 25 ,Male , Tikhir, Student apex member, kohima

<sup>147</sup> Tsula aged 28 ,female , Tikhir , Church co worker , Shamator village

<sup>148</sup> Rijang, aged 64 , Male , Yimkhiung, Goanbura , Dimapur

<sup>149</sup> Joseph aged 64 , male, Tikhir, Village council member, Shamator village

seek jobs. Many young people moved even to other states for employment out of compulsion, but only a few made it, and some found the wrong ways to earn money. However, only the ordinary people eventually suffered the loss of life and the destruction of physical and human capital.

**Other challenges faced by Yimkhiung and Tikhir due to the ethnic conflict:**

1. Due to the ethnic conflict, the community has a negative label within the Naga society. It is portrayed as the black sheep in society, and faced alienation, which strained relationships with neighbouring groups, which was another challenge as it affected their social life and internal cohesion.
2. The ethnic conflict has made it susceptible to any invasion from all possible quarters.
3. The traditional territory has shrunk considerably and is limited in access to resources and cultural sites.
4. Ethnic conflict hindered overall growth in educational progress, limiting infrastructure development and job opportunities and made both communities permanently backwards economically in all aspects.
5. The direct ramification of the conflict was that the brilliant minds of the younger generation have been maimed and are experiencing stigmatisation, which has damaged their confidence and creates a sense of limited prospects.
6. Due to ongoing conflict, the communities were denied access to their ancestral land and have been limited in their traditional rights. Geographical jurisdiction and socio-cultural life have been poorly threatened.

7. The conflict resulted in the government's apathy toward this area's development; thus, both Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities continue to suffer from uneven development and poor infrastructure.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **STRATEGIES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Conflict situations and remedial measures from past conflicts are universal and can be found wherever people live in groups, such as families, neighbourhoods, communities, and societies. Conflicts take various forms, including disagreements, disputes, quarrels, and clashes, which can occur with or without violence. Whatever their form, conflicts are struggles between at least two interdependent groups and are harmful because they lead to disharmony, tension and even destruction. Therefore, like conflicts, methods or mechanisms for resolving conflicts are also universal. In modern society, essential mechanisms for dealing with conflict include law enforcement agencies such as the government, courts, and police (D'Souza, 2011, pp. 76-91).

Gupta (2020) notes that the traditional conflict resolution mechanism is a long-standing, persistent social practice rooted in the local cultural setting, aiming to settle disputes, reduce tensions, and repair broken social relationships (p. 10). According to the thesaurus dictionary, the term 'traditional' means "beliefs, legends, customs, information, etc., handed down from generation to generation, especially by words of mouth or by practice.

Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms can play a significant role in dispute management. In traditional conflict resolution, the elders derive their authority from customs and the community in which they live. Since the power given to these elders is significant, their decision is unlikely to be challenged. Unlike ordinary courts, local elders are more focused on making and reaching morally acceptable decisions to promote good relations between the disputing groups and, therefore, the entire community. In traditional societies, conflicts are resolved through internal and external social controls. The decision is based on the community's customary and traditional law and values. 'Gupta (2020) also mentioned that traditional conflict resolution, in which indigenous institutions can help resolve conflicts or play another significant role in the community's well-being, maintains stability and security because conflict is a communal responsibility in most of the country. In a pastoralist

community, people seem to follow their traditional leaders and elders rather than a modern system such as the police or a court decision' (pp. 10-11).

In tribal societies, indigenous conflict resolution makes a significant contribution to the development of peace and security within the community. The mechanism for preventing violence and regulating conflict. Furthermore, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms can contribute to the termination of violence and sustainable peace-building at both local and national levels, as evidenced by peace-building efforts in free land and villages. Secondly, traditional conflict resolution methods are not state-centric and hence are credited with legitimacy. Thirdly, the tradition of conflict resolution mechanisms emphasises the psychosocial and spiritual dimensions of conflict transformation, which means that conflict resolution building encompasses not only negotiations, political solutions, and material reconstruction, but also mental and spiritual healing (Gupta, 2020, pp. 11-12). Fourth, Indigenous conflict mechanisms regulate relationships and foster understanding, thereby reducing reliance on formal contracts to manage relationships and create understanding (Hwedie & Rankopo, 2012, p. 35). Lastly, the traditional mechanism of conflict resolution is more more straightforward and easier than modern institution like the police and a court ruling, it saves the cost, time, and power of the people.

The traditional conflict resolution mechanism has a limited scope of application and effectiveness at the grassroots level. That means it is applicable to rural areas among indigenous people or in small community contexts, such as family, clan, village, or neighbourhood groups. Another problem that people living in a modern environment face is having relatively loose ties to their places of origin. Further, 'traditional conflict resolution mechanisms often contradict the universal standards of human rights. It is the conservative characters of traditional approaches that do not fit well with modernising influences from within the community' (Gupta, 2020, pp.11-12). Traditional conflict mechanisms lack appropriate and efficient enforcement instruments and techniques, which are unable to handle modern conflicts such as environmental conflict and ethnic conflict created by the nation-building process, land disputes and conflicts over natural resources that indigenous

people face. It could not resolve the conflict locally, so the conflict had to be taken outside the village' (Ibid, p.13).

### **Conflict mediation and resolution in indigenous communities:**

The Navajo Nation is one of the largest Native American tribes in the United States. This community has its traditional conflict resolution mechanism. This community practised "*Hozho*", which means peace-making and rituals performed by chant and songs. This ritual ceremony is an indigenous method of dispute resolution held when a community experiences an imbalance in its relationships. This traditional method helps to resolve conflicts and disputes and restore relationships (Wiegand, 2021). Ghebretkle & Rammala (2019) also explain 'indigenous conflict resolution in African communities, where traditional conflict resolution allows for the management and resolving conflicts. For instance, the concept of Ubuntu is a humanistic philosophy that expresses the African philosophy of humanness, a notion with cultural significance in diverse African societies. Ubuntu combines traditional conflict prevention and peace-building concepts. It embraces acknowledging guilt, showing remorse and repentance by those who commit injustice, asking for and receiving forgiveness, and providing compensation or reparation as a prelude for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence' (pp.328-329). Another example about 'the Moi tribe in western Indonesia, who practised traditional sacred rituals called "*Teh bless*", is an indigenous conflict resolution method used to resolve almost all kinds of conflicts in their community-for example, disputes may arise due to theft, defamation, cheating, and other factors. The role of "*Teh bless*" is represented by people who have pure hearts and are not involved in the conflict. The participant will not be allowed to join '*Teh Bless*' if these requirements are unmet. Also, it ensures that the conflict is resolved without further problems. The blessing ceremony is performed at the riverbank by immersing their head in the Molo River' (Putra, 2020). The last example is on southern Sudan, which consists of four ethnic groups, such as Bantus, Nilohamites, Nilotics and Sudanese, engaged in ethnic conflict. 'In recent years, conflicts have happened from the overarching war in Sudan, which is still responsible for tension in communities following the establishment of the South Sudanese Government. The process of indigenous conflict resolution is subject to cultural diversity in Sudan' (Wassara, 2007, pp.1-5) Customary mediation, Compensation, and restitution are most familiar conflict

resolution mechanisms in the context of the Dinka and Nuer tribes and practices of the traditional system of authority to enforce decisions. Such is also the mechanism of conflict resolution by compensation. It applies to both criminal and civil wrongs against an individual. 'The compensation for adultery is known as Akor, which is paid to the husband of the woman involved in adultery. An individual who elopes with an unmarried girl pays Aruok to the girl's father. This chief decides issues in the customary law courts, and they perform sacrifices and oaths and mediate in all forms of conflict' (Wassara, 2007, pp. 7-9).

### **Traditional mechanism of conflict resolution in India:**

The Indian heritage of Buddhism, Hinduism, saint teaching, Vedantic, Advaitic and Jain religious philosophies provide an important orientation for resolving conflicts. It has given birth to many religions of the world, and they have lived peacefully with each other for hundreds of years. This has been possible due to India's ethos of plurality, humanism, and openness, its sense of adaptability, and the power of assimilation. 'The ancient Indian heritage religious philosophy all embrace peace and love. The Indian tradition does not categorically prohibit the use of violence, despite extolling Ahimsa (non-violence) as the greatest virtue. Mahatma Gandhi is believed to be the prime factor in achieving peace and harmony, ultimately leading to conflict reconciliation (Pathania, 2020, para.7).

In India, traditional methods of conflict resolution take various forms, primarily through traditional institutions of self-government and customary Panchayats. Customary laws are practised in a few regions, particularly in tribal societies (Tamang, 2015, pp. 61-62). As Kumar & Lama (2021) described, tribal communities like the Garasiya and Bhil of the southern parts of Rajasthan and the northern parts of Gujarat have mostly practised 'Muatana' as a form of custom from the beginning to resolve disputes in society. The term is composed of two words: Maut means 'death,' and Ana means 'money'; together, it means 'money or compensation offered against death' (p. 713). The reason for introducing such a traditional practice is to provide economic benefits to the victim's family, enabling them to manage their living expenses. And there will be fear in people of society about committing such crimes (Ibid., p. 714).

According to the Kondhs tribe of Odisha, the traditional method of resolving disputes among village residents plays an essential role in resolving issues with the help of influential and respected elders within their community. They resolve the dispute through dialogue as the major strategy for conflict resolution. The meeting commences with the lighting of incense sticks as a sign of sacredness. When a dispute arises among the villages, it can be escalated and addressed by the higher authority to resolve the issue. Elders are judges who make decisions and resolve disputes between two villages, maintaining impartiality. It cultivated an ancient method of conflict resolution through a male-dominated group of elders known as '*Mukhiyas*', who serve as decision-makers, followed by '*Baarika*' as a messenger, and they ensure that conflicts are resolved peacefully. After the meeting, a meal was served by the person who was pronounced guilty (Singh, 2023, para.45)

### **Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms among tribal communities in Northeast India:**

The Northeast is historically known as a region of conflict in India. It has been experiencing several conflicts, such as nationalist and ethnic conflicts over land, migration, natural resource conflicts, displacement, and others, all for the protection of identity or culture. Widespread violence has become a fact of life. However, north-eastern areas are mostly tribal societies, so they still value peace and reconciliation practised and the oral traditions of north-eastern tribal societies. Such Assam, Arunachal, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim (Tamang, 2015, pp.70-71). Indigenous communities in Northeast India practice and adhere to their traditional institutions of governance and conflict resolution mechanisms. Indigenous conflict mechanisms handle both minor and major disputes, including criminal matters, and the decision is based on traditional customary law and values. This conflict mechanism focuses on reconciliation, dialogue and restoring social peace. The sixth schedule of the Indian constitution, also referred to as "Mini parliament", was set up to protect the interests of tribal populations, culture and identity of hill tribes. Currently, the Sixth Schedule, which exists in four northeastern states —Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura —protects against outside influence and helps preserve the traditional governance system of the tribes. The local governance practices in tribal areas are sustained even today (Tamang, 2015, p. 68).

Traditional systems for conflict resolution in Arunachal Pradesh have been playing a significant role in bringing peace among members of the tribal society. They are unique to each other and differ in the structure of every tribe. Among them is the Nyishi tribe of Kurung Kumey district in Arunachal Pradesh, where Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are still practised. In Nyishi tribal society, people still believe that traditional mechanisms contribute much to peace and security in promoting development. However, social life is gradually changing due to the force of political and economic activities. The Nyishi tribal community practices Barak, where the elderly people hold meetings to resolve land conflicts. The offender is called and asked about his decision, and he is directed to withdraw it. If he agrees, then the problem is presumed to be solved. However, some greedy people refuse to accept, so in such a situation, punishment is awarded to the accused by restoring the land to the community along with one ‘*Sebe*’ (‘*Mithun*’ and a fine from the accused known as ‘*Ashapungpahi*’) (Ramya, 2014, pp.1-5).

Banerjee (2023) also notes the ‘*Dorbaar*’ and ‘*Nochma*’, which are traditional instruments used to resolve conflicts and mechanisms practised by the Indigenous communities of the Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo tribes in Meghalaya state. *Dorbaar* and ‘*Nochma*’ play a similar role and use a unique approach to conflict resolution. ‘*Nochma*’ is a traditional community institution prevalent among the Garo tribe and is considered the head of the clan. ‘*Nochma*’ is led by women and plays an important role in maintaining and resolving disputes in families and communities (para. 3). This traditional women's institution brings peaceful resolution to conflicts and also promotes gender equality. ‘*Dorbaar*’ is a traditional community institution prevalent among the Khasi and Jaintia tribes, serving as a mediator. They consider peacemakers as they resolve all dispute cases in the community (Ibid, para. 5).

Indigenous Kuki conflict mechanism in Manipur, ‘*Salam sat*’, a community-based mechanism for reconciliation and resolving issues peacefully, rather than punishing individuals. In the Kuki community, such a mechanism helps maintain social stability within the community (Ibid). Another example is of the Hmar, the indigenous tribe of Mizoram. They mostly rely on their traditions for social stability and identity formation. The conflict

resolution method of the Hmar society, like that of any other tribal society, includes mediation, reconciliation, and negotiation. “*Se-sun*” is a community-based conflict resolution ceremony; this event is a traditional feast of reconciliation. During the ceremony, an animal, usually a Mithun (Indian bison), is slaughtered as part of the reconciliation process, and it also signifies a lasting peace accord, gratitude, and symbolises blood–brotherhood (Songate, 2023, p. 49). As the Naga society is guided by customary law, there is not much scope for abuse of power. Indigenous institutions can either help resolve conflicts or play a significant role in the community’s wellbeing, stability, and security, as conflict is often a communal responsibility in most parts of the country (Gupta, 2020, pp. 10-11).

### **Traditional Methods of Conflict Resolution in Yimkhiung Naga Tribe:**

In a tribal society like the Naga tribes, which has a rich cultural heritage, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms can play a significant role in resolving conflicts and promoting community well-being, stability, and security. There are many traditional conflict resolution mechanisms among the Yimkhiung Naga tribe as Cheerangal (2016) describes, a note about traditional governance among the Yimkhiung and their village administration. In the indigenous community of Yimkhiung Naga society, their governing body is led by the village founders, known as ‘*Kiulongthsuru*’. ‘*Kiulongthsuru*’ is derived from an ideal to maintain peace and order in the community or village. ‘*Kiulongthsuru*’ means “those who make the village, and also were responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the village. The ‘*Kiulongthsuru*’ is the head, and the body of ‘*Kiulongthsuru*’ is a cultural group of the traditional council as part of customary law. The members of ‘*Kiulongthsuru*’ are entrusted with the responsibility of resolving disputes, of which ‘*Kiulongthsuru*’ is the head. They are solely responsible for settling the disputes and speaking on behalf of the people and their wisdom to resolve community problems as they arise. The village governing body consists of the co-founder or their representative. They exercised the judicial and legislative power and followed the traditional rules and regulations in the village. Their main duty is to manage the village affairs and hold final authority on all village matters (pp.174-175). ‘*Kiulongthsuru*’ representatives are called ‘*Limberu*’ and hold positions in the village. Each nominated person from the village is responsible for managing village affairs. The body consists of four members:

### ***Chochoru***

A person who works as a messenger or secretary for the '*kiulongthsupu*' to assist in passing information to another village.

### ***Limpuru***

It refers to the mediator and peacekeeper; this person, holding this position, is entrusted with the responsibility of negotiating peace and settling conflicts between the village and the community. The village should respect and accommodate him, allowing him to walk into any village. '*Limpuru*' carried a pine branch torch in the night to indicate his presence.

### ***Mahtsuru***

It refers to reconciliation. A person holding this position needs to be capable of leading the village's well-being. '*Mahtsahru*' is responsible for restoring harmony within the village and fostering understanding between individuals or groups.

### ***Ayangru***

It refers to the vigilance and responsibility in guarding something. In forefathers' time, the safety and security of the village were of more concern. '*Ayangru*' are nominated from the village to guard and vigilance over the properties of the village, while all others are occupied in the fields. There was no fixed remuneration for his service. However, to avoid overburdening, the village people contributed by taking turns with their fieldwork and providing him with food grains and other necessities (Cheerangal, 2016, p. 176).

In the event of starting a new village, '*Kiulongthsupu*', the village owner, along with other clan representatives, makes decisions about demarcation and boundaries. The method of settlement would be to listen to the parties and reach an amicable agreement. In the Yimkhiung Naga society, family heads are respected and obeyed. Within the village, various types of disputes can arise between families living there. Some of them can be offences against the person, others offences against property. Insulting others, spreading false stories

about others, hurting others, murder or attempt to murder, adultery, elopement, and rape are some of the offences against the person. Common offences against property are theft and trespass.

**Family conflict:**

Though the Yimkhiung community has been described as peace-loving and respectful of customary laws, disputes and conflicts have been reported. The community has various disputes, including those within families and between families in the village. According to their narration, the resolution is mentioned below. This information was collected from the respondents who were interviewed. Disputes within families, such as those between brothers and sisters or between husband and wife, are often settled within the family. However, when matters are of serious concern and damages have occurred, either in person or in kind, the fine is imposed. Thus, quarrels within the family are usually settled by the '*khiungpuh*' (elders) of the clan.

**Extra Marital relation/Divorce:**

In case divorce occurs because of the husband's adultery, the wife has the right to claim the property and also impose a heavy fine. The same procedure applies to the wife in case of adultery. If divorce occurs due to the woman's barrenness, then she can take only her belongings; she does not have any right to claim any property since the husband is not at fault here. This reflects gender discrimination against women for not conceiving children.

**Murder, Killings and Related Crimes**

Killings, murder and other violent acts have always been strongly condemned in tribal communities in northeast India, including the Nagas. Crimes like murder were sporadic in Yimkhiung Society, but if they took place, then they were severely dealt with, and the guilty were condemned by the entire society and no mercy was shown to the offender. In former times, severe offences like murder were dealt with by the '*kiulongthsur*' (village body), and Gaonburas was the usual punishment. The '*kiulongthsur*' and village elders held a meeting with families of both the offender and the victim. They first listened to the plea, and then the

village head decided on their penalties. The murderer is punished with a fine, including monetary compensation, forfeiture of land and property, and dismissal from the village.

The punishment differs according to the manner of murder; in case of accidental killing, the matter could be settled by both families by themselves. However, if they are not satisfied with the decision, they proceed to the 'kiulonghsru' for justice, where punishment can include a fine or banishment of the offender from the locality and village for a short period (Sebastian, 2015, p. 193). Following the establishment of British rule and the development of modern society, traditional courts were no longer permitted to handle cases of murder. In this generation, such cases of murder and killing, the traditional conflict mechanism is incapacitated due to different reasons. Most traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are weak in resolving conflicts. Therefore, cases of murder were disposed of by the FIR police and the investigation administration. The traditional village council or court managed other disputes and conflicts.

#### **Dispute within the village:**

In the past, conflicts within the village were settled through negotiations. The clan leaders take the initial steps to resolve the disputes. However, it was peacefully resolved through negotiations because, at that time, the Chieftain's decision was the ultimate judge. In those days, the headman, or Gaonbura, was a very powerful figure in the Naga political hierarchy. He was responsible for all the government programs in a village. In the past, conflicts were often avoided through traditional practices and the guidance of village headmen and elders. When conflicts arose, they were immediately resolved through discussion, negotiation, and compromise. Depending on the evidence and the judgment of the elders, grant the best justice. Oath-taking is the last option if you fail to settle (Sebastian, 2015, pp. 188- 189).

'*Pinthrumtsu*' is a traditional practice of resolving an issue through a treaty for reconciliation between two groups. During this meeting, groups of opposite exchange anything but commonly exchange by giving Naga Dao to each other as a sign of friendship. Moreover, '*Pinkhnen*' is another term for Yimkhiung, a traditional method of resolving conflicts through parties and reconciliation. The council of elders scrutinises many cases. They also

examined carefully whether the parties were involved. However, when the evidence was inconclusive, the ritual of oath-taking was adopted. Oath-taking practice of solving conflict by sewing beads and shells on the ground as a promise to each other, we will not fight until the shield grows.<sup>150</sup> However, traditional conflict mechanisms are no longer relevant in the present era because individuals find it more convenient to use formal meetings than adhere to such old rituals.

### ***Kazahu***

'*Kazahu*'<sup>151</sup> is a traditional practice that the Yimkhiung ancestors followed. Here, Kaza, which means Tiger, is an oath-taking ceremony that was commonly practised among the Yimkhiung Nagas. The sacred object in this case is the tooth of a tiger. The person takes the oath by biting a tiger's tooth between their teeth, as they promise that their position is correct and accurate. Among the Yimkhiung and some other Naga tribes, the tooth of a tiger is valued and preserved as a prized and sacred object. It is also believed in olden times that if a person makes a false claim by biting the tooth of a tiger, a tiger will kill him, or his family will, sooner or later, suffer various types of misfortunes, such as sickness and even death. Such a swearing ceremony is so serious that only a few will dare to take such an oath. Young people, children, and women are not permitted to come within proximity to the ceremony site. An oath-taking ceremony is the final and irrevocable step in resolving a dispute. An oath implies lifelong obedience to the agreement, and any violation of it invites severe punishment. During the ceremony, Goanburas, older adults of the village, are invited to conduct such an oath because elders are regarded as guardians. Yimkhiung Naga was a traditional society that was a gerontocracy, a body composed solely of '*Khiungpuh*' (elders), who exercised authority and wielded power. Only the very old men (*Khiungpuh*) were eligible to constitute any ceremony. This was because the "old men were qualified to inherit and use power because they had lived long and gained knowledge, wisdom and understanding through seeing, listening and doing. However, at present, individuals do not practice the traditional conflict rituals exactly as they were due to strict laws.

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<sup>150</sup>Throngso aged 75, Male, Yimkhiung, Head Dobashi, Shamator.

<sup>151</sup>'*Kazahu*' word is a In Yimkhiung dialect which term as biting tooth of a Tiger, is a ceremony of oath taking among the two persons.

### ***Tsuhyung Aarih***

‘Conventionally, whenever a conflict broke out between two villages, mediators (*Mahsahru*) were assigned to organise a ‘peace meal’ between the warring groups and thus used to resolve disputes between them as an act of reconciliation. ‘*Tsuhyung Aarih*’, word ‘*Tsuhyung*’ means to eat and ‘*Aarih*’ means unity. This is a traditional sign to indicate the end of the conflict settlement procedure. This act refers to the meal arranged when an agreement has been reached upon after the conflict situation. It was learned that communities still follow ancient customs in the modern period, as they are an easy way to reconcile, unlike other ancient rituals.

### ***Metümniu and Tsungkamneo***

‘*Metümniu* and *Tsungkamneo*’ are the traditional festivals of the Yimkhiung tribe. It is the harvest festival, which is of great importance, and People belonging to this tribe observe this festival with respect. During the festival, the people pray for the deceased souls and also for a good harvest. People host grand celebrations and come together to dance, feast, and rejoice as a community. The festival is also marked by a meaningful revival of what has been lost or broken. This is the time people greet each other with a cheerful attitude, even to their enemies. Hence, people ensure that they clean their homes and surroundings, restoring a sense of order. Whenever the two groups share meat, it is a sign that the settlement is coming to an end. So this festival also means reconciliation, as per the knowledge shared by the respondents.

## **The Traditional Conflict Resolution Practices of the Tikhir Tribe:**

### **Theft**

Stealing is one of the most shameful acts in society. The village council handles this matter, and punishment depends on the crime and the stolen item. A fine can include field, land, and cash. If the crime is repeated, the culprit is expelled from the village.

### ***Atakraih***

'*Atakraih*' is a traditional practice of solving issues by having a meal between the two groups. It refers to the meal arranged when an agreement has been reached after a case has been resolved. This is a traditional sign to end the settlement procedure. The acceptance of the meat by the other is a sign of peace. The guilty party arranges the meal as a sign of reconciliation over the hurtful event and a symbol of peaceful coexistence in the future.

### ***Litsuhti***

'*Litsuhti*' is a traditional method of conflict resolution practised by the Tikhir. Whenever conflict is resolved, they take an oath by biting on wrapped cloths with boar teeth mixed with soil. Moreover, they make a peace deal with the warring groups.

### ***Mongtsuturezzah***

'*Mongtsuturezzah*' is another traditional practice followed after the conflict is resolved in a land dispute, involving a peaceful meal to gather at the border between the villages. Elders used indigenous rites and rituals to ensure community members' compelling compliance. Since Naga is a traditional society, it is a gerontocracy comprised only of '*khiungpuh*' (elders), who exercised authority and wielded power. Only the very old men (*khiungpuh*) were eligible to constitute any rite because the "old men were qualified to inherit and use power because they had lived long and gained knowledge, wisdom and understanding through seeing, listening and doing. It was also a life-sacrifice oath-taking ceremony performed by the village elders. Only the eldest one is responsible and performs the oath-taking on behalf of the village. During the rite, giant pigs are slaughtered, and their heads are given to the eldest. The rest of the carcasses are cut into pieces and distributed among the village elders. Distribute pieces of meat should be kept and cooked in the Morung, and should not be allowed to be kept in their kitchen. It was believed that Children and youngsters were forbidden to eat meat because if a person made a false claim during the oath, then he and his family would, sooner or later, suffer various types of misfortunes, such as sickness and even death. The taking ceremony is scary, and only a few dare to take such an oath. In the modern era, communities no longer adhere to traditional rituals, as individuals are less serious about these matters and find it challenging to employ such conflict resolution mechanisms.

### ***Mongtsuty***

‘*Mongtsuty*’ is a traditional practice that was observed in the past. ‘*Mongtsuti*’ in the Tikhir dialect is a peace meal. It is a peace meeting, and only the elders and goanborus of the village are invited. Even cooked meals are served and eaten only by older adults. The groups should be gathered within the boundary, but the chosen location should be wisely discussed before gathering. The ritual is performed by placing charcoal over the Naga Tao and then blowing it off. Moreover, immediately pour some black tea over Tao and sip the tea from Naga Tao as a swear to end the conflict between the two enemies. This is how communities forgive each other for wrongdoing and resolve issues by sharing and eating the meals that have been prepared. Moreover, it is forbidden to take home leftover meals; whatever food has been prepared for rituals should be left in the place where the rituals were performed to avoid any misfortune.

### **Opinions and Perceptions of the Respondents on Conflict Resolution:**

Regarding the study findings on the role of conflict resolution in the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities, data collected from respondents with different backgrounds were analysed and interpreted by the researcher according to the study's objectives. These are given under different subheadings, which are as follows:

**Table 6.1: Possibility of solution for Ethnic Conflict**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						Total
		Employee	church workers	Farmers	Village Elders	Dobashi	Youth	
Yes	Yimkhiung	17(13)	4(3)	8(6)	17(13)	5(4)	5(4)	56(42)
	Tikhir	7(5)	4(3)	16(12)	19(14)	3(2)	15(11)	64(48)
	Total	24(18)	8(6)	24(18)	36(27)	8(6)	20(15)	120(90)
No	yimkhiung	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	1(1)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)
	Total	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	4(3)	5(4)
Don't know	yimkhiung	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)
	Total	1(1)	0(0)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	6(5)	8(6)
	Total	25(19)	8(6)	25(19)	37(27)	8(6)	30(23)	133(100)

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 6.1 explains that respondents believe ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga communities can be resolved. It was found that 90 per cent of the respondents believed that ethnic conflict could be solved by following certain terms. Most respondents believe that ethnic conflict is possible if communities come together for negotiation. One of the respondents narrated that *“If the other speaking dialect people approach properly without any conflict, then it is possible to resolve and settle the dispute. The community should cooperate and be honest with each other. And also demarcation of land should be specific between groups”*.<sup>152</sup> In the opinion of another respondent, *“I would suggest very relevant suggestion, tribal councils from both Tikhir and Yimkhiung should be united then only issues can immediately shared and able to bring on the table to discuss without any confusion and fear”*.<sup>153</sup> One respondent narrated, *“Unity is the way to solving the dispute among the communities. For the community progression, we need good leadership and rights of land owners will stop this ethnic problem”*.<sup>154</sup> Another narration of the respondent, *“The Church play an important role in every society and it powerful factor of change, in my view, even church bodies should take initiative in bringing peace and understanding. The community tribal council, along with the government, must make an early decision to resolve these issues.”*<sup>155</sup> Another opinion of the respondent is that *“At present, the community has no guilty feelings about the past incident and even has an understanding of each other, which means that coming together can be possible to settle the issues. So, here, to bring about the old conflict, either one side has to compromise or cooperate with whatever decision will be made by both community tribal leaders and the government to bring a lasting solution to the ethnic conflict”*.<sup>156</sup> This demonstrates that communities must compromise and cooperate. Both community tribal apex bodies should come together with the government to bring a lasting solution to the ethnic conflict.

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<sup>152</sup> Solomba aged 35 , Male . Yimkhiung, Tribal members, Shamator town.

<sup>153</sup> Tokim aged 61, Male, Tikhir,GB union apex member, Kiusam town.

<sup>154</sup> Yanruikiu aged 27, ,Male Tikhir, student apex member, Shamator .

<sup>155</sup> Ato Yim ,aged 72 male, Yimkhiung, Farmer, Dimapur

<sup>156</sup> Tsurito aged 54 male, Yimhkiung, Govt employee Shamator .

However, four per cent of the respondents believed that this old ethnic conflict between Yimkhiung and Tikhir cannot be resolved due to several reasons, such as the community not being ready to compromise and not engaging in negotiations. Even the tribal leaders are weak and confused about the issues. Till now, the government has not paid enough attention and support. They do not see any solution to these old issues. While another six per cent of the respondents have not responded, most were youth. They are not sure about the issues in their community.

**Table 6.2: Role of the community in conflict resolution**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						Total
		Employee	church workers	Farmer	Village Elders	Dobashi	Youth	
Yes	Yimkhiung	13(10)	3(2)	6(5)	9(7)	5(4)	5(4)	41(31)
	Tikhir	4(3)	4(3)	12(9)	14(11)	1(1)	13(10)	48(36)
	Total	17(13)	7(5)	18(14)	23(17)	6(5)	18(14)	89(67)
No	Yimkhiung	4(3)	0(0)	1(1)	1(1)	0(0)	1(1)	7(5)
	Tikhir	3(2)	0(0)	3(2)	4(3)	0(0)	5(4)	15(11)
	Total	7(5)	0(0)	4(3)	5(4)	0(0)	6(5)	22(17)
Don't know	Yimkhiung	1(1)	1(1)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	13(10)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	2(2)	2(2)	2(2)	3(2)	9(7)
	Total	1(1)	1(1)	3(2)	9(7)	2(2)	6(5)	22(17)
	Whole Total	25(19)	8(6)	25(19)	37(27)	8(6)	30(23)	133(100)

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 6.2 explains respondents' opinions on the role of both tribes in taking serious measures to resolve this ethnic conflict. It was found that 67 per cent of respondents believed that their community equally contributed to solving their community issues. Most respondents who shared that community are equally contributing to finding a lasting solution. Narration of the respondent, *"We communities are putting good effort to keep peace and harmony among each other even if we are deprived in many ways"*.<sup>157</sup> Another respondent narrated that *"we, the Yimkhiung community, longed for peace and harmony in society. We believe that bloodshed cannot bring a solution. Therefore, trying the best to resolve this issue through peaceful negotiation and respecting each other is the only way to bring harmony to the community."*<sup>158</sup> One of the respondents narrated, "We in the community are equally

<sup>157</sup> Tothong aged 26 , Male, Tikhir, student apex member, Shamator village .

<sup>158</sup> Asangle aged 31 ,female , yimkhiung, farmer , Shamator Town.

contributing: churches, unions, and the whole community of Tikhir standing strong together and supporting every decision taken by the tribal leaders.”<sup>159</sup> This demonstrates that the community is an integral part of the system and is committed to contributing to its peace and development.

However, 17% of respondents reported that the community did not initiate any conflict resolution efforts. Most respondents, including farmers, village leaders, employees, and students, shared the view that the community does not make any effort to resolve ethnic conflicts. One of the respondents narrated, *“I do not see any serious contribution because many are still in the memories, unable to come out from the fear. People feel insecure still and fail to build trust with each other”*.<sup>160</sup> One of the Yimkhiung respondents narrated, *“Our community issue is a serious matter, so individuals who hold power and authority are not much involved in conflict resolution .”*<sup>161</sup> This suggests that some people remain insecure about community leaders’ efforts to resolve the long-standing conflict.

**Table 6.3: Role of Education in Conflict Resolution**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						
		Employee	church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Yes	Yimkhiung	8(6)	0(0)	5(4)	6(4)	3(2)	3(2)	27(20)
	Tikhir	3(2)	2(2)	5(4)	8(6)	1(1)	9(7)	29(22)
	Total	11(8)	2(2)	10(8)	15(11)	4(3)	12(9)	53(40)
No	Yimkhiung	7(5)	4(3)	3(2)	7(5)	2(2)	4(3)	27(20)
	Tikhir	3(2)	2(2)	8(6)	8(6)	3(2)	10(8)	34(25)
	Total	10(8)	6(5)	11(5)	15(11)	3(2)	11(8)	61(46)
No response	Yimkhiung	2(2)	0(0)	2(2)	3(2)	0(0)	2(2)	9(7)
	Tikhir	1(1)	0(0)	2(2)	3(2)	0(0)	4(3)	10(8)
	Total	3(2)	0(0)	4(3)	6(5)	0(0)	6(5)	19(14)
Category-wise Total		25(19)	8(6)	25(19)	37(27)	8(6)	30(23)	133(100)

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages.

<sup>159</sup> Athong aged 52, Male, Tikhir, farmer, Kiusam village.

<sup>160</sup> Lakiumong aged 102, Male, Yimkhiung , Head Gaonbura , shamator.

<sup>161</sup> Dopong aged 32, Male, Yimkhiung, Govt employee, Shamator town.

Table No. 6.3 explains that respondents' education can be a factor in solving ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga communities. It was found that 40 per cent of the respondents believed that education could be another factor in solving communal issues. These respondents opined that the community needs to prioritise education to bring an end to ethnic issues and shared their views that education expansion can improve the creation of a genuinely democratic society, as it enables people to understand the problems in various ways. An educated person's mind never pollutes society; instead, it brings friendly relations. One respondent said, *“Through education, people will understand how to prevent conflict by allowing both parties to express their point of view and interest without resorting to violence”*.<sup>162</sup> Another respondent shared that *“we need quality education to bring about positive changes and understand the importance of rights and justice.”*<sup>163</sup> The respondent narrates, *“Education can play the role of change. An educated mind cannot lead societies into chaos; it knows what is good for the people. They can lead without conflict, teach humanity to society, and contribute towards future peacebuilding.”*<sup>164</sup> Respondents' responses indicate that education can be both part of the problem and part of the solution. Educated men and women help successive generations understand the violent conflict that took place in their society and potentially contribute to future peacebuilding.

However, 46 per cent of the respondents do not agree that education alone can bring peace and a solution to community conflict. One of the respondents narrated, *“Education is powerful tool to enhance our thinking and knowledge but ethnic conflict solution cannot depend only to education since it is an ancient and long communities conflict and struggle which can be solved by a reliable person who has a deep history and convincing in nature and intelligent”*.<sup>165</sup> One of the respondents also said, *“Besides education, there are lots of other mandatory factors that are warranted. However, the natural process of realisation should be allowed to complete its course. It has already reached the saturation point of 39 years, so education is not only a reason for a solution but also a realisation and equal understanding of the ethnic issues by both communities, which is more critical. The*

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<sup>162</sup>Ashila, aged 39 , female, Yimkhiung, Government employee, Mokokchung.

<sup>163</sup>Tothong aged 26 , Male, Tikhir, Student apex member, Shamator village

<sup>164</sup>Tokiu Tikhir, aged 42, Male, Tikhir, farmer, Shamator village.

<sup>165</sup> Lakiumong aged 102 ,Yimkhiung, Head Goanbura, Shamator.

*community need to look for peace and equal contribution. Only then can solutions be easily accessed*".<sup>166</sup> Another respondent mentioned that *"we cannot end the ethnic conflict problem simply by bringing education. This ethnic community conflict needs to be understood deeply. Govt direction, good leaders, and intellectual individuals must be part of this issue, and the political system should be taught properly"*.<sup>167</sup> This reflects that education alone cannot solve the issues since it was an ethnic conflict. Without reconciliation between the two communities and government involvement, this ancient conflict might continue for another generation.

Another 14 per cent of the respondents have not responded to this point to avoid misinformation. Moreover, some find it difficult to respond because they need a more accurate understanding of the problems. Respondents, including farmers, village elders, and youth, refused to share their views because they were unsure whether education could help resolve the ethnic issues, and other reasons may have been a factor in their reluctance.

From the above analysis, it was found that education is a crucial factor in addressing community issues. However, a solution cannot be reached without intelligence and proper consultation between the communities and leaders. The issue is the tribal-related conflict between the two communities, which requires proper consultation as it is an old and long-standing struggle that should be reconciled from both sides. Therefore, education alone is insufficient; government support and a strong movement of tribal leaders are also necessary to resolve this issue.

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<sup>166</sup>Dr.Rejngkhum aged 45, Male ,Yimkhiung, Govt lecturer, Mokokchung.

<sup>167</sup>A14, aged 25, Male, Tikhir, Unemployed youth, Kohima.

**Table 6.4: Role of Students' Union in Conflict Resolution**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						Total
		Employee	church workers	Farmers	Village Elders	Dobashis	Youth	
Yes	Yimkhiung	8(6)	1(1)	4(3)	11(8)	0(0)	5(4)	29(22)
	Tikhir	4(3)	2(2)	7(5)	10(7)	1(1)	15(11)	39(29)
	Total	<b>12(9)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>11(8)</b>	<b>21(16)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>20(15)</b>	<b>68(51)</b>
No	Yimkhiung	6(5)	1(1)	1(1)	1(1)	0(0)	1(1)	10(7)
	Tikhir	1(1)	0(0)	2(2)	3(2)	0(0)	1(1)	7(5)
	Total	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>3(2)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>17(13)</b>
Don't know	Yimkhiung	4(3)	2(2)	3(2)	5(4)	5(4)	3(2)	22(16)
	Tikhir	2(2)	2(2)	8(6)	7(5)	2(2)	5(4)	26(20)
	Total	<b>6(5)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>11(8)</b>	<b>12(9)</b>	<b>7(5)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>48(36)</b>
	<b>Whole Total</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(28)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 6.4 explains the respondents' opinions on the role of student apex bodies in conflict resolution. It was found that 51 per cent of respondents stated that the student bodies of their community contribute to resolving ethnic issues. The student union or association play an important role in the welfare of students and society. Respondents believe that the student apex can also contribute to promoting peace and resolving conflicts in the community. One of the teacher respondents narrated that "*Students' apex bodies supporting the community and awareness program to win the demand without shedding tears and blood between the communities. Student bodies comprised many sections, and all are working with one goal: peace, progress and unity*".<sup>168</sup>

Another Tikhir respondent narrated, "*Several unions and associations of Tikhir students are doing their part and encouraging young minds to have good knowledge in politics and to be educated so that they would not make mistakes like their elders. Due to a lack of trust and knowledge, today's community is in trouble with so much misunderstanding.*"<sup>169</sup> This indicates that, according to the respondents, students can be agents of change by engaging in peace-building and conflict-resolution activities within society. They can participate in various activities designed to address community issues and their consequences.

<sup>168</sup> Yanchi aged 62, Male, Tikhir, Govt teacher, Kiusam town

<sup>169</sup> A17, aged 24, Male, Tikhir, student, Kiphire town.

However, 13 per cent of the respondents think that student units of any form have no power to be involved without permission. One of the respondents narrated, “*Students of any unit, neither union/organisation, can take separate responsibility for community issues. For these ethnic conflict issues, any union should work collaboratively under the apex banner of the tribal council*”.<sup>170</sup> One respondent mentioned, “*No, in my opinion, since this is communal conflict, the student community has no power to handle such crucial ethnic issues because this matter can be taken only by either the tribal bodies or the government.*”<sup>171</sup> Another respondent said, “*Students' associations work for the welfare of students. Students' bodies cannot take part if it is not relevant to them.*”<sup>172</sup> This suggests that student unions, regardless of their form, can initiate peace-building activities but may not effectively address community issues. Students and youth have no authority to take community issues into their own hands, and youth or young people are the most vulnerable members of society.

**Table 6.6: Role of the Dobashi court in conflict resolution**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						
		Employee	Church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Relevant	Yimkhiung	2(2)	1(1)	2(2)	1(1)	5(4)	1(1)	12(9)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	6(5)	7(5)	3(2)	7(5)	21(16)
	Total	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>1(1)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	8(6)	8(6)	<b>10(8)</b>	<b>33(25)</b>
Not Relevant	Yimkhiung	9(7)	2(2)	5(4)	7(5)	0(0)	3(2)	27(20)
	Tikhir	4(3)	3(2)	7(5)	9(7)	0(0)	6(5)	31(23)
	Total	<b>13(10)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>12(9)</b>	<b>16(12)</b>	0(0)	<b>9(7)</b>	<b>58(43)</b>
No opinion	Yimkhiung	7(5)	1(1)	1(1)	9(7)	0(0)	5(4)	23(17)
	Tikhir	3(2)	1(1)	4(3)	4(3)	0(0)	6(5)	19(14)
	Total	<b>10(8)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>13(10)</b>	0(0)	<b>11(8)</b>	<b>42(32)</b>
Category-wise total		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

<sup>170</sup> Khalenme, aged 38, Male, Yimkhiung, Church co-member, Shamator town.

<sup>171</sup> Yanruikiu, aged 27, Male, Tikhir, Student apex member, Shamator village.

<sup>172</sup> Dopong, aged 32, Male, Yimkhkung community, govt employee, Shamator town.

Table 6.6 attempts to determine whether the Dobashi court is effective in resolving the ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities. It was found that 25 per cent of respondents stated that the Dobashi court is practical, as it plays an essential role in the preservation of Naga customary laws and practices. Dobashi's services are indispensable to Naga's social life. One of the Tikhir respondent said, "*Dobashi court deals with local affairs, and their duty functions in civil and criminal cases and the administration of justice. Dobashi court takes any cases according to the Naga customary laws*".<sup>173</sup> Another Tikhir respondent said, "*Dobashi court shall take the role to stop violence and maintain peace within the community*".<sup>174</sup> One respondent said that "*the Dobashi court also plays a vital role in peace maintenance in the community*".<sup>175</sup> This reflects that Dobashi Court and its services are influential and coveted in administration and other areas.

However, 43 per cent of the respondents stated that the Dobashi court is unreliable in addressing tribal issues and is not the rightful court to handle more significant issues, such as communal problems. According to the narration of one respondent, "*The Dobashi court is not relevant for community issues; their assigned service is to maintain peace within the village. The solution to the communal conflict between Yimkhiung and Tikhir can be done only by the Tribal bodies*".<sup>176</sup> One of the respondents said, "*The relevance of the Dobashi court in Naga society has somehow faded. The justice and law department in Nagaland has scrapped its jurisdiction to hear and try criminal cases, and thus retains jurisdiction only for civil cases. It has to do with criminal cases; not only that, but the biases among most Dabashi courts are overtly apparent, limiting the scope of appeal.*"<sup>177</sup> Dobashi is responsible for the well-being of the village, but cannot take charge of major cases, such as communal conflict and crime, which means matters can only be addressed in petty cases.

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<sup>173</sup> Yanchi aged 62 Male , Tikhir, Govt teacher, Kiusam

<sup>174</sup> Ato, aged 43, Male, Tikhir, village council member, Shamator village

<sup>175</sup> Joseph, aged 64, Male, Tikhir, Village chairman, Shamator village.

<sup>176</sup> Kumrila , aged 35 , Female, Yimkhiung, Lecturer, Shamator town.

<sup>177</sup>Dr.Rejingkhum , aged 45, Male , Yimkhiung, Govt lecturer, Mokokchung .

**Table 6.7: Role of the village council in solving ethnic conflict**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						
		Employee	Church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Relevant	Yimkhiung	5(4)	3(2)	6(4)	15(11)	4(3)	6(4)	39(29)
	Tikhir	5(4)	3(2)	14(11)	20(15)	3(2)	11(8)	56(42)
	Total	10(7)	6(4)	20(15)	35(26)	7(5)	7(5)	95(71)
Not relevant	Yimkhiung	10(8)	1(1)	2(2)	2(2)	1(1)	1(1)	17(13)
	Tikhir	1(1)	1(1)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	5(4)	8(6)
	Total	11(8)	2(2)	3(2)	2(2)	1(1)	6(5)	25(19)
No opinion	Yimkhiung	3(2)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	2(2)	5(4)
	Tikhir	1(1)	0(0)	2(2)	0(0)	0(0)	5(4)	8(6)
	Total	4(3)	0(0)	2(2)	0(0)	0(0)	7(5)	13(10)
	Total	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork.

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table 6.7 attempts to determine whether the village council is effective in resolving the ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities. It was found that 71 per cent of respondents accepted that the village council body is an authorised unit in decision-making and settling the issues. One of the Tikhir student respondents said, *“The village council body is competent to take responsibility for settling all the disputes in the village, according to Naga customary laws strongly. Village council body can solve ethnic issues between Yimkhiung and Tikhir if they take the matter by rigorously”*.<sup>178</sup> Another respondent said *“Village council are the competent unit to approach and discuss if in case is related of village issues”*.<sup>179</sup> One of Tikhir respondent mentioned, *“Village council body are very much reliable to take such matter in hand however if they collaborate with tribal council then that can be make more convincing to discussed as well as bring into conclusion”*.<sup>180</sup> Another Tikhir respondent mentioned that *“Village council can also take initiative in solving this ethnic issue but under the banner of tribal council”*.<sup>181</sup> This shows that the village council is another significant statutory body empowered with powers and functions in decision-making within the village. The village council assumes significant authority and overall

<sup>178</sup> A15 , aged 25 Male. Tikhir , Student , Shamator village .

<sup>179</sup> Yanrui , aged 27 , Male, Tikhir, Student apex members , Shamator village.

<sup>180</sup> Thangpong , aged 103, male , tikhir, Head Gaonbura , Kiusam

<sup>181</sup> Ashila , aged 39 , female , Yimkhiung, Govt teacher , Mokokchung

responsibility for administering justice. Since time immemorial, the village government was the only government known to them and an accepted institution with a strong sense of solidarity. Village council bodies are reliable, however, with fixed powers and functions to handle any issues only with permission from the tribal council.

However, 19 per cent of respondents opined that village council bodies are no longer reliable on ethnic issues. One of the respondents said, *“Communal issues between Yimkhiung and Tikhir are a serious matter, so only with government involvement can the community conflict be solved. The Village council is dominated only by the tribal council body. For such serious matters, the village council has nothing to do since they are formed for village development and maintenance”*. One of the respondents also mentioned that, *“The village council is not much relevant in solving ethnic conflict because the village councils at the village level are more aware of the situation. However, the village council cannot go further because they abide by the tribal resolution and order”*. One of the respondents narrated, *“No customary court in Nagaland is vested with the power and jurisdiction to try and hear the criminal cases; therefore, it is incompetent. In criminal cases, they can arrest the culprit in a serious case, but they have to immediately hand over the culprit to the police or the nearest administration officer.”*<sup>182</sup> Thus, the village council is the primary authority for administering justice within the village. However, in conflict issues, the village council cannot proceed without the Tribal council order; they must abide by the resolutions. The tribal council in every Naga tribe is the statutory body and is empowered to decide on tribal issues in the community.

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<sup>182</sup> Dr Rejingkhum , aged 45 , Male , Yimkhiung, Govt lecturer , Mokokchung

**Table 6.8: Element can bring peace and a solution**

Response	Community	Profile of respondents						
		Employee	church worker	Farmer	Village Elder	Dobashi	Youth	Total
Church bodies	Yimkhiung	5(4)	2(2)	3(2)	2(2)	0(0)	1(1)	13(10)
	Tikhir	3(2)	2(2)	2(2)	3(2)	0(0)	1(1)	11(8)
	Total	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>5(3)</b>	<b>5(5)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>2(2)</b>	<b>24(18)</b>
Tribal bodies	Yimkhiung	8(6)	2(2)	4(3)	14(10)	3(2)	6(4)	37(28)
	Tikhir	3(2)	2(2)	8(6)	12(9)	1(1)	9(7)	35(26)
	Total	<b>11(8)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>12(9)</b>	<b>26(20)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>15(11)</b>	<b>72(54)</b>
Student bodies	Yimkhiung	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4(3)	4(4)
	Total	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>
Other specify	Yimkhiung	5(4)	0(0)	3(2)	3(2)	2(2)	2(2)	15(11)
	Tikhir	1(1)	0(0)	5(4)	3(2)	2(2)	2(2)	13(10)
	Total	<b>6(4)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>6(4)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>4(3)</b>	<b>28(21)</b>
No response	Yimkhiung	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	2(2)	2(2)
	Tikhir	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(2)	3(2)
	Total	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>0(0)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>	<b>5(4)</b>
<b>Total in category-wise</b>		<b>25(19)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>25(19)</b>	<b>37(27)</b>	<b>8(6)</b>	<b>30(23)</b>	<b>133(100)</b>

Source: Fieldwork

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages

Table No. 6.8 shows that the respondents of both communities have the same response and reason for the solution to end the ethnic clash between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities. It was found that 54 per cent of respondents shared a common relevant suggestion, believing that tribal bodies and councils, which are authorised to handle these ethnic issues, could provide solutions because they have the power to address any issues and make decisions without depending on anyone. This Ethnic conflict is an old and long-standing community conflict and struggle between Yimkhiung and Tikhir Nagas. In this case, a more robust and intelligent individual can offer valuable suggestions for fostering community harmony. Mostly shared the views, some suggested by respondents, that *“Tribal councils from both Yimkhiung and Tikhir should be united. Then, only issues can be immediately shared and brought to the table to discuss without any confusion and fear”*.<sup>183</sup> According to the respondent's opinion and suggestions, *“Neither institutions have power and answers to this issue except tribal bodies. Tribal bodies are the authorised and responsible*

<sup>183</sup> Tokim aged 61, Male, Tikhir, tribal leaders Kiusam town –Kiphire

*for taking care of their communal social life. Hence, tribal bodies from both sides need to be practical and immediately come up with good decisions to end the problems”.*<sup>184</sup> This reflects that the communal conflict between these two communities can be solved if the Tribal apex bodies of both communities take strong steps. The reason is that, according to the narration from one of the Tikhir respondents, *“Tribal council in every Naga tribe is the statutory body and is empowered to stand and decide on tribal issues in the community. Tribal council bodies have the authority to discuss the matter and address the grievances of the community's people; otherwise, no one has any rights. Tribal bodies and the government have to come forward to solve this serious issue between the communities, Yimkhiung and Tikhir”.*<sup>185</sup>

While it is found that 24 per cent of respondents believed that church bodies could play the role of bringing peace in society because the church can take the initiative in bringing peace and understanding since the church engages in the battle for peace and also opens the heart to an understanding and make a person to encounter with others by respect and love. It is also recommended that the government encourage religious leaders to cooperate with all relevant local institutions and authorities to present the true image of religion in its proper context. One of the respondents narrated that *“Church community is a holistic system, and can play a prominent role in society. The church promoted sustainable peace and overcame any incitement to violence. Church leaders need to initiate the promotion of unity in multi-ethnic churches. Therefore, the church must do a lot more to evaluate its role in promoting positive ethnicity”.*<sup>186</sup>

However, the table shows that four per cent of respondents believed that even student bodies could bring solutions to the end of the ethnic conflict between Yimkhiung and Tikhir. However, student bodies need to be more competent and have authority over communal issues rather than taking the initiative by sharing grievances and participating in good roles to bring peace and organising awareness to help reduce this conflict stress in the community. However, most of these responses were given by youth only. Another 21 per cent of

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<sup>184</sup> SC Akhang, aged 79, Male. Yimkhiung , Head Goabura , Shamator town.

<sup>185</sup> Tsuthong, aged 49, Male, Tikhir, Tribal Members, Shamator village.

<sup>186</sup> Akhang aged 70, male Tikhir, Former Tribal Council Members,Dimapur .

respondents commonly suggest bringing peace within the community through government, education, and good leadership, because government involvement is much needed for achieving peace within communities. If the government addresses this issue, it can provide a solution as soon as possible without involving violence or suspicion between the communities. Another respondent shared and believed that the community can achieve peace by improving and emphasising education for all, thereby creating a genuinely democratic society. Because education should focus on the actual value of ethnic Yimkhiung or Tikhir Nagas and the transformation of local knowledge into academic knowledge, an educated society can indeed bring about positive changes in the future. Lastly, a few respondents shared their views, recalling the historical legacy by tracing the unity and peace of their ancestors to reunite the communities. Effective leadership and secure land ownership rights can resolve these ethnic issues and foster understanding between the two communities. One respondent said that *"By meeting at one table and instead of pointing fingers at one another, confer where one had gone wrong, ask forgiveness and resolve to live in unity just as the Christian mandate taught by our lord"*.<sup>187</sup>

### **Suggestive Measures for Conflict Resolution:**

Both communities opined that the Church can also play a significant role in addressing such issues in society. According to them, religious leaders must play a crucial and critical role in the peace plan for ethnic conflicts. They should offer impactful advice through religious worship and other counselling programs, which can help to avoid opportunities to take revenge by people who have gone through such pain and devastation. It is obvious that victims of communities are still hurt and might take the opportunity to take revenge. This is recommended to improve the relationship between the local communities. One of the respondents said that *"Church communities have a prominent role to play not only in reconciliations in the societies but also in developing structures which will sustain peace and overcome any incitement to violence. Church leaders need to initiate the promotion of unity in multi-ethnic churches. The church must be at the forefront of fighting tribalism and forging an abiding spirit of Naga society. The impact of the church is the only hope to seek*

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<sup>187</sup> Kumrila, aged 35, female, yimkhiung, lecturer, Shamator Town.

*the value of harmony. Therefore, the church must do a lot more to evaluate its role in promoting positive ethnicity. And lastly, education also needs to emphasise more promptly*".<sup>188</sup> Additionally, the Tribal council are the most potent and modern tribal institution, with centralisation of power that plays a vital role in every Naga society. These Tribal councils are a dominant institution with considerable executive and judicial powers. Tribal bodies are the ones who consult the rest and make any significant decisions. Every Naga society is guided by customary law; tribal council bodies are, in part.

The tribal bodies played a role in the Naga peace process, representing the community's voice. Every respondent in this study commonly emphasised the importance and power of tribal bodies and their positive role in resolving this conflict. Suggestion and Opinion by Respondent that, "*Tribal councils in every Naga tribe are the statutory body and are strongly empowered to stand and decide on tribal issues in the community. So, according to the position, Tribal councils from both the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes are the only ones who can take responsibility. Both the apex bodies should come forward and unite. Then, only issues can immediately be shared and brought to the table to discuss without any confusion and fear*".<sup>189</sup> According to the respondent's opinion and suggestions, "*Tribal bodies, both Yimkhiung and Tikhir, are only responsible for taking care of their communal social life. Neither has the power nor the answers to this issue except tribal bodies. Hence, tribal bodies from both sides need to be practical and immediately come up with good decisions to end the problems*".<sup>190</sup>

Lastly, the official and unofficial peace processes should proceed in parallel. Conflict resolution through negotiation can be beneficial for all parties involved. There should be a joint committee under the guidance of the highest administrative and legal authority, with influential persons from both communities in conflict involved to address mutual issues. There should be regular and positive official interactions in the event of a potential conflict between the leadership of both communities. According to the opinion of the respondent,

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<sup>188</sup> Yuktsu aged 71, male Tikhir, Former Tribal Council Members, Dimapur .

<sup>189</sup> TokimTikhir , aged 61, Male , Tikhir, Union GB President , Kiusam town.

<sup>190</sup> SC Akhang, aged 79, Male. Yimkhiung , Head Goabura , Shamator town.

*“The conflict regions are the most sensitive, and, thereby, utmost care should be taken regarding security in those areas. The indigenous tribes residing in conflict-ridden regions must get the needs they deserve, and power should not be held only by a majority in a region. There should be some proactive measures, such as identifying sensitive areas and core issues of conflict.”*<sup>191</sup>

It was felt that the root causes of the conflict needed to be identified, made explicit, and collectively reconciled by the groups. The groups involved should be encouraged to develop a shared vision for what they can do together. Living in a society with diverse cultures, languages, and traditions can be challenging if we fail to respect and accept one another. When the cultural codes of other communities are understood, conflict prevention and resolution can be more effective. Once we learn and understand the beliefs of others, we can coexist peacefully. Opinion by one of the respondents: *“a) If either of the community approaches without any attention to conflict. b) The community needs to specify the proper demarcation of land. C) Community should co-operate with each other instead of violence”*.<sup>192</sup> Another opinion by respondent: *“Unity and respect between the communities. Good leaders can help stop this long-standing conflict”*.<sup>193</sup> Restoration and strengthening of institutions of local self-governance, including strong village and tribal councils, is also a requirement for the dissemination of development initiatives undertaken by the government. Opinion by respondent: *“Proper land demarcation and restoration of alienated lands to tribal populations is also one of the requirements of conflict resolution”*.<sup>194</sup>

In conflict, the administration should alert the community to misinformation, rumours, and other external influences that encourage discord. Law enforcement authorities and security agencies should maintain close relations with the local population in sensitive areas. There should be a rapid response team in such situations. Researchers and officials must review all relevant information, including cultural values, history, socioeconomic status, issues, and perceived power dynamics within conflict-prone communities, to explore practical steps for

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<sup>191</sup> Asanglaaged 31, female, Yimkhkung, Farmer, Shamator

<sup>192</sup> Solomba aged 35, Male, Yimkhiung, Tribal council members, Shamator town.

<sup>193</sup> John aged 38 Male, Tikhir, farmer, Kiusam village.

<sup>194</sup> Kiuthsang aged 76, Male, Tikhir, Head Goanbura, Kiusam

conflict resolution. Ideally, these steps should be logical and convincing for both parties. One Yimkhiung respondent shared their opinion that *“In this conflict, the two groups involved in the initial issues were confused. Currently, the community has no guilty feelings about the past incident and lacks an understanding of it. To bring an end to the conflict, one side must either compromise or cooperate with the decision made by both community tribal leaders and the government, thereby achieving a lasting solution to the ethnic conflict. This is an old conflict, and many generations have dealt with this issue without realising that we have wasted so many good years in making progress, development, and personal achievement.”*

The conflict situation arises mainly because of the communicative distance between the groups. The distance may be physical or psychological. Therefore, since prejudice is often a product of ignorance, people should be provided with accurate facts. Arrangements should, therefore, be made to disseminate the culture of one group to another group. This will enhance the possibility of mutual understanding and pave the way for evolving a composite Indian culture (Chaklader, 1981, pp. 80-84). The socio-cultural organisation of the minorities may be utilised for the purpose. Generally, these organisations try to foster their respective language and culture. They should be reoriented and reorganised to become a meeting place for different linguistic groups, including the majority group. The minority organisation should have at least two sets of language groups, one for the pupils of different linguistic groups. a) In their annual gathering or other cultural programs, people of all linguistic groups, including the majority, should be invited to attend and participate in the programs. b) Every year, there should be a week-long program in each state that is organised jointly by the minority organisation and the socio-cultural organisation of the majority group. Artistic activities such as drama, music, folk dance, and painting exhibitions should be held at this social gathering. Moreover, every community should be encouraged to stage at least one program in a language other than its own (Ibid, pp. 83-85).

### **Role of Government in Conflict Resolution:**

In this study, respondents were asked for their opinions on the role of the government in resolving the long-pending conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes. Both communities felt that the government needed to conduct a broader consultation with other

stakeholders to accept the suggestions and pursue mediating strategies to achieve conflict resolution. The government should make this its top priority and work with both the tribal councils and communities to find a permanent solution. Only then would it eventually solve all problems, and both communities would once again be safe and peaceful in their land, the state of Nagaland. Opinion and suggestions by a Tikhir respondent were as follows: *“The government is responsible for taking care of all aspects of its citizens' lives. Community conflict between Yimkhiung and Tikhir Tribes is an old and long-standing issue, such a serious issue where even communities are unable to bring a solution, there is no doubt that the government is best equipped to solve the problem”*.<sup>195</sup>

The Nagaland cabinet conducted a consultative meeting with the Yimkhiung Tribal Council (YTC) and Tikhir Tribal Council (TTC) in January 2022. Following further deliberative discussions, a tribal delegate from both communities signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to maintain peace and harmony between them, which had been unresolved for many decades. The Nagaland cabinet approved the creation of Shamator as a district, and YTC further supported Tikhir's official recognition as a separate Naga tribe.<sup>196</sup> In 2022, the Nagaland government, under the home department, issued certain modalities and guidelines concerning the Yimkhiung and Tikhir in the interest of their peace, mutual development, and harmony. The official recognition of the Tikhir as a separate Naga tribe is a milestone achieved after decades of struggle. This recognition was closely tied to the creation of Shamator as a separate district. The Nagaland government has facilitated an agreement and adherence between the Yimkhiung Tribal Council (YTC) and Tikhir Tribal Council (TTC), as well as all other concerned parties, for unity and progress.

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<sup>195</sup> Akhang aged 70, male Tikhir, former apex member , Shamator .

<sup>196</sup> Nagaland cabinet approves (January 19 2022) , [https://www.krctimes.com/news/nagaland-cabinet-approves-creation-of-shamator-district/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.krctimes.com/news/nagaland-cabinet-approves-creation-of-shamator-district/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

‘The home department notifies upon recognition of Tikhir as a separate Naga tribe dated 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022, the following are the modalities and guidelines for the recognition of Tikhir as a separate Naga tribe’ (DIPR, 2022, para.1) <sup>197</sup>:

- ‘According to the Tikhir, as a separate Naga tribe, shall not involve any geographical delineation or demarcation of any area’(Ibid)
- ‘The people in those villages having Yimkhiung and Tikhir families have lived in harmony over the ages in the villages, and they have evolved their laws and customs governing ownership of land and its use. There shall be no attempt to divide the village according to the community they belong to, and the same shall not be allowed, existing habitation shall remain as it is’(Ibid).
- ‘Yimkhiung tribal council (YTC) and Tikhir tribal council (TTC) shall jointly give undertaking, to the effect that no coercive measure shall be adopted by them to ensure the retention /reversion of any member of the Tikhir community to the Yimkhiung community and vice versa’(Ibid).
- ‘Every member of the Tikhir / Yimkhiung community, wherever they are, shall have the freedom to choose the community to which they belong’(Ibid).
- ‘Either community in a separate place of worship, anywhere with service conducted in the chosen dialect, should not be prevented/ obstructed in any manner by the group’(Ibid).
- Holding of any public gatherings, such as conferences or general crusade meetings by any community at any location in the area inhabited by Yimkhiung and Tikhir shall not be obstructed on land ownership grounds. Permission granted for land

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<sup>197</sup> Modalities and guideline (2022). <https://ipr.nagaland.gov.in/modalities-and-guidelines-consequent-upon-recognition-tikhir-separate-naga-tribe>

ownership. Permission granted, any group or community shall also have no relevance to any claim of the traditional landowner at those locations/areas (Ibid).

- ‘Separate tribal recognition of Tikhir shall not affect any prevailing land ownership issue, as they are not connected, and the status quo will be maintained’(Ibid),
- ‘This is issued with the approval of the cabinet conveyed vide letter no CAB-2/2013 dated 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022 of the cabinet secretariat’ (Ibid).

This notification by the Nagaland state government resulted in a peace agreement between the Yimkhuing and Tikhir tribes. It has restored peace and provided hope for better relationships between the two communities.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

An ethnic conflict occurs between two or more groups as they strive to preserve their identity and achieve their desired goals. In such conflicts, people try to conspire against others based on their identity and ethnicity. While the source of the conflict may be political, social, economic, or religious, the individuals in conflict must explicitly fight for the position of the ethnic group within society. Conflict amongst ethnic groups is a widely observed social phenomenon across national societies worldwide. Ethnic conflict incurs several direct and indirect costs that adversely affect the living conditions of households in both the short and long term. The significant consequences of ethnic conflict are loss of lives, human suffering and destruction of communities (Sunny, 2014, p.5). Studies show that the number of deaths due to intra-state conflict has increased three times that of inter-state wars since World War II (Fearon & Latin, 2003). Moreover, most violent conflicts occur in poor and developing countries.

In a pluralistic society, ethnic groups may differ in their respective numerical strengths, political philosophies, socioeconomic affiliations, influence over national issues, and communal solidarity when two or more groups strive to preserve their identity and achieve their desired goals. In such conflicts, people often conspire against others based on their identity and ethnicity. The complex stratification of caste is unique to it, and it is also overlaid with equally complex identities in languages, religion, and regionalism that straddle imprecise geographical boundaries. Instrumentalists argue that ethnic identities in India are immutable yet have been continually shaped and reshaped (Joseph, 2015, p.86). The ethnic conflict in Indian society is a significant issue. Internally divisive forces of ethnic separatism are threatening the internal cohesion and territorial integrity of the Nation. In Punjab, the problem is Sikh dominance. Ethnic conflict in Punjab in the early 1980s was a violent rivalry against Sikhs in Delhi in which approximately 3,000 people died, and the reason was due to the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi (Singh, 1993, pp.85-88). 'Hindu-Muslim communal conflict is a chronic issue that evolved due to the complex configuration of cultural, political,

and religious issues. Even though each problem situation is historically distinct and unique, they all fall under the generic class of ethno-social issues in plural societies (Rastogi, 1986, pp. 219-221).

Northeast India has existed as a distinct geographical, socio-economic, cultural, and political civilisation. It comprises eight states: Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim. The region boasts the most extraordinary ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity, with over 160 scheduled tribes and a diverse non-tribal population. In a sense, the peripheral location and its resultant under-development have made the societies in the region perpetually vulnerable to various kinds of violence, conflicts and displacement. Northeast India has been a breeding ground for multiple conflicts, ranging from armed conflicts to ethnic conflicts. The hundreds of ethnic groups in the Northeast do not live in distinct areas. Therefore, their demand for an ethnic homeland often leads to generalised violence and mass displacement of people (Borgohain & Samrat, 2014, pp.12-36).

One of the primary reasons for the ethnic conflict in the Northeast is the large influx of immigration that threatens the very existence of the indigenous people. Today, northeast India has become one of India's most complex conflict zones. India is the most ethnically diverse society in the world. Ethnic clashes in the North-Eastern hill region are not new. Most of the clashes are related to the dispute over land ownership. Some of the major ethnic conflicts in the region include those between the Garos of Meghalaya and the Rabhas of Assam, the violent clashes between the Kuki and Naga tribes in Manipur, the ethnic conflict between the Hmars and Dimasa tribes in South Assam, and the ethnic tensions between the Meitei and Naga and Kuki tribes in Manipur. (Dutta & Bhuyan, 200, pp. 626–633). This study aims to provide in-depth insights into the interrelationship between language, identity, and ethnic conflict, with the goal of understanding the causes and consequences of ethnic conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities in Nagaland.

The Yimkhiung Naga is one of the major Naga tribes in Nagaland (India). Yimkhiung is one of the essential tribes in Nagaland, and it is also the second-largest in the multilingual

Tuensang district. The Tribe inhabits the eastern region, predominantly found in the eastern areas of the districts of Shamator and Tuensang. They are sparsely distributed in districts such as Dimapur, Kohima, and Mokokchung in the state of Nagaland. The Yimkhiung are linguistically divided into six dialect groups: Chirr, Langa, Tikhir, Makory, Longphur, and Phununger. The common language among these people is Langa.

The Tikhir Naga became one of the newest recognised tribes in Nagaland on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022, after being separated from the Yimkhiung tribe. The Tikhir tribe inhabits the eastern part of Nagaland, primarily in the districts of Shamator, Kiphire, and Noklak. They belong to the members of the Tibeto-Burman group, which is of Mongoloid ancestry, and have a unique cultural heritage. They speak '*Tikhilau*' as their mother tongue. They were initially known as 'Tukhiauu', the name was changed to Tikhir following the British invasion of the Naga Hills due to the British accent, and this name has been used ever since. The Tikhir are known and addressed by distinct names given by different Naga Tribes. Tikhir by the Sangtam tribe is called '*Tikhere*' while the Changs tribe preferred to address it as '*Thikhupu*'. The Khimnungan tribe, also known as 'Chitlihie', and the Yimkhiung Naga tribe were previously referred to as '*Tukhiru*', respectively. '*Tukhemi*' was known by the tribe of Semas (Sumi).

The comprehensive Yimkhiung language, with Langa dialect, was once the language of the whole Yimkhiung and Tikhir tribes. Before the advent of Christianity and Western education in the area, the Tikhir villagers maintained cordial relations with the Yimkhiung community and voluntarily accepted the Yimkhiung language for communication purposes. Eventually, the Yimkhiung (Langa) dialect became the dominant language and was made compulsory under the Shamator circle. As a result of this situation, the Tikhir dialect was set aside, and the Yimkhiung language became the dominant language in the region due to the widespread use of the Yimkhiung dialect in the area. The quest to recognise certain dialect-speaking groups as tribes became a factor for communal tension and thus resulted in physical violence between Yimkhiung and Tikhir. From another perspective, dialect separation was due to

inferior feelings towards the dominant group (Yimkhiung), who felt the partiality had been done and strongly resented it.

History tells us that there were times when the Yimkhiung and other fellow sub-dialects of Tikhir had long-lasting relations. They shared the territorial boundaries and resources of the surrounding land with both communities. There were times when the relationship was quite brotherly and fraternal before being identified as the Tikhir sub-dialect of the Naga tribe. The ancestors of both sub-dialect groups lived in a peaceful atmosphere since no corruption was known in their time. However, the research revealed that modernity has transformed traditional culture, giving rise to issues concerning identity within their community. The conflict within the Yimkhiung ethnic fold is that the Tikhir, a sub-tribe dialect group, have sought to separate their attributed identity from the Yimkhiung tribe and claim a distinct culture for themselves as a major sub-tribe. However, the struggle has extended to violence and hostilities over the course of decades in Nagaland's Kiphire and Shamator districts. By the 1980s, the relationship between the Yimkhiung and the Tikhir Naga had begun with animosity and issues concerning identity.

The comprehensive Yimkhiung Language, with the Langa dialect, was once the Language of the entire Yimkhiung and the Tikhir tribes. Tikhir dialect was set aside, and the Yimkhiung language dominated the region. The quest to recognise certain dialect-speaking groups as tribes became a factor for communal tension and thus resulted in physical violence between Yimkhiung and Tikhir. Research has revealed that, over the past few decades, the consciousness of ethnic Identity and diversity has significantly increased. Dialect separation was due to inferior feelings towards the dominant group (Yimkhiung), who felt that they had been discriminated against and strongly resented it. Later, it began to make a difference in each culture, dialect, and other aspects, which led to problems becoming an integral part of language identity. Tikhir-speaking people have always felt that their language was distinct; however, they were compelled to use the Langa dialect in everyday interactions as part of the Yimkhiung community, which generated feelings of alienation. As a result, they have been fighting for upliftment based on their ethnic distinctiveness, and the leading cause of the conflict has been predominantly ethnic identity.

In late 1959, the villagers of Tikhir gradually converted to Christianity, and the Tikhir villages were affiliated with the Yimkhiung Baptist Church Association. In this way, all of the Tikhir villages came under one association. In 1963, some educated Tikhir reintroduced their dialect and translated the Christian hymns and a few books of the New Testament into the Tikhir dialect to use in their church. However, their demand was rejected, and the Tikhir community approached forming a separate organisation, TBPA (*Tikhir Baptist Piti Atukhianti*) under their community, but it was not accepted. In 1980, out of resentment, a village of the Tikhir dialect had disassociated from the YBBA (*Yimkhiung Baptist Borü Amükhungdo*).

As the consciousness of being a Tikhir gradually developed, they showed resentment in seeking the state government's attention to fulfil their demand for recognition of a separate Tikhir tribe identity. Thus, the Tikhir movement began to emerge by forming various Tikhir tribal organisations to fight on an ethnic basis for greater power and political authority within the community. The early organisation, formed in 1965, was the Tikhir Public Movement (TPM), established at Chikiuponger village. In 1965, the Tikhir Public Movement (TPM) was established in Chikiuponger village, and with a small group of office bearers, it was led by the organisation. In 1970, a new team of office bearers was selected, and the nomenclature was also rechristened from Tikhir Public Movement (TPM) to Tikhir Tribal Movement (TTM). In January 1981, at Sukiur village, a new formation called the Tikhir Student Union (TSU) was established. In 1982, the first general conference of the Tikhir Student Union took place in Mutonger village (Yutsu, 2016, p. 9). These processes reflect the growing consciousness and assertion of their Tikhir ethnicity and identity. It ultimately led to the establishment of the Tikhir Tribal Council (TTC) in 1983, followed by the apex student body, religious wings, Tikhir women's HOHO, and other Tikhir-based organisations. The entire Tikhir group had initiated protests against the state government, demanding recognition as a separate tribe for the Tikhir people (Das, 2014, p.51). All the Tikhir villagers started to unify against the imposition and enforced dominance of the Langa dialect. The Tikhir community initiated a widespread effort to establish separate Tikhir organisations to preserve their ethnic identity in society.

Around the early 1980s, some people from the Tikhir sub-dialect began forming small groups to secede from the Yimkhiung family and establish themselves as a distinct and separate tribe. This has resulted in violent clashes among them, leading to the loss of human lives, and most are still in fear of losing their past. The intra-tribal ethnic conflict among the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities resulted in a separate identity for themselves with territorial claims as well, which led to the displacement of their people in search of life and livelihood. The violent nature of these conflicts has caused socio-economic insecurity and a lack of progress, and people live in fear of uncertainty.

The study found that the economic situation in conflict-affected areas and villages deteriorated after the conflict. In rural areas, most farmers depend solely on the land, but due to violence, cultivation cannot continue regularly, resulting in a decline in crop production. Many farmers in affected areas have experienced a decline in crop production due to irregular cultivation, resulting in increased poverty and a deterioration in all aspects of their lives. Furthermore, research revealed that the community conflict had a severe impact on their economy, causing uncertainty, an increase in debt, and disruption of normal economic activities. Many of the families of both the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities were affected by the loss of wage labour work, insufficient money, and the wastage of food stocks due to the ethnic conflict. In some cases, once the situation returned to normal, families returned to their native places, as they had depended entirely on agriculture in their villages.

The situation was more aggravated because the riots destroyed the interdependence between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir villages. The conflict-affected areas were unsafe to leave, so many farmers were forced to buy food items that they would have otherwise grown on their farms. They lost and were unable to harvest their crops. Many farmers and daily earners barely survived, but nothing remained. Due to clashes, the villagers blocked their way to another village. Hence, many could not escape from the village for their safety and were stuck in the middle of such violence. Mobs and leaders were fighting for their benefit and to fulfil their ideas. However, only the ordinary people eventually suffered the loss of life and the destruction of physical and human capital.

According to the study, the relatives of the common ancestor living in the village can no longer maintain bonhomie with the opposing community. Family and relatives started separating according to the ethnic group, and sadly, families are forced to detach from their ethnicity, but cannot fight back because they are weak and helpless. Husbands and wives from different warring communities became separated. Social ties between Yimkhiung and Tikhir are weakened due to conflict, the husbands and wives from different warring communities are separated, and many sacrificed their wives on the altar of ethnicity. Marriages to two opposing Yimkhiung ethnic groups have become taboo for the Tikhir community. The study also indicates that the conflict had a devastating impact on the women of the region. Due to conflict, some women were widowed and left homeless. Matrimonial bonds within Tikhir and Yimkhiung become an issue, so women from either Tikhir or Yimkhiung who are married to someone from a different sub-dialect become insecure. 'Conflict has a devastating effect on the lives and dignity of women.

It is found that children were stopped outdoors due to the fear and insecurity of their parents. The violent atmosphere affected the concentration due to anxiety, loss of freedom and deprivation of their education. It is also found that some children lost their parents during the community conflict, and children become victims of the conflict. This orphan was compelled to stay at somebody's home as a babysitter and forced into child labour, which is a prevalent issue in Nagaland. The ethnic conflict severely affected many youths in conflict-affected areas. It is learned from the study that the feeling of insecurity and the complex social environment had failed them in many ways, disturbing their concentration in all aspects of life. This kind of violence has caused untold problems for many young individuals. Since there was no scope in the educational field, young men were motivated to join the army, and young girls often made marriage their last choice. The Tikhir tribe were a minority group, and the strength and force of the dominant group had the worst impact and disturbed all aspects of life due to ethnic clashes. The conflict has lost its self-identity from the rest of society and lives a life of insecurity. Unfortunately, this ethnic conflict deprived the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga youths of their fundamental rights and risked many young people's lives.

The study also found that the conflict tension had significantly hampered education. The attack on villages between the adversaries disturbed the environment so much that the children of affected villages/areas were on the run for survival, completely stunting their education further, the mind of the warring groups were also engulfed with a vengeance without enough basic amenities of substances whereby many were compelled to give up studies. As a result of the conflict, the community and government are no longer interested or give no attention to the education infrastructure facilities in the affected region.

The indigenous peoples of Yimkhiung and Tikhir's conflict mechanism is a mechanism for reconciliation and resolving issues peacefully, rather than punishing individuals. Although Indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution provide social harmony in the community, it is effective at the grassroots level only and are mainly confined to rural areas among indigenous people. The study found that there is still regard for indigenous conflict resolution because it resolves conflicts in a friendly manner, and the procedure is transparent. However, in modern society, indigenous traditions cannot be utilised at all times in all situations due to certain conditions. In the past, the indigenous community of Yimkhiung Naga society had a governing body led by the village founders – ‘Kiulongthuru’, who managed the administrative unit and also greatly influenced the ways of living of the Yimkhiung. Passes by in almost all aspects of life. Modern ideas are replacing the indigenous method. Modernised Naga society recognised customary laws but excludes indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, opting instead for modern means, such as courts and judicial provisions.

After numerous deliberations and efforts, the Nagaland cabinet and tribal delegates from both communities signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to maintain peace and harmony between them, which had been unresolved for many decades. In 2022, the Government of Nagaland state notified the recognition of Tikhir as a separate Naga tribe. It issued specific modalities and guidelines concerning the Yimkhiung and Tikhir in the interest of their peace, mutual development, and harmony. Nevertheless, the efforts to improve the peaceful and conducive environment between them should continue to bring development to the region. According to the modalities, the people in those villages, who have Yimkhiung

and Tikhir families, have lived in harmony over the ages, and they have developed their laws and customs governing land ownership and its use. There shall be no attempt to divide the village according to the community they belong to, and the same shall not be allowed; existing habitation shall remain as it is. Furthermore, either community in a separate place of worship, or anywhere with services conducted in the chosen dialect, should not be prevented or obstructed in any manner by the group.

**Recommendations:**

- The Tribal council should be wise in every decision-making and needs to initiate the promotion of unity since they are the most potent and modern tribal institution, with centralisation of power, which plays a significant part in every Naga society.
- The government needed to conduct a broader consultation with other parties to accept the suggestions and pursue mediating strategies to achieve conflict resolution.
- The government should make this its top priority and work with both the tribal councils and communities to find a permanent solution. Only then would it eventually solve all problems, and both communities would once again be safe and peaceful in their land, the state of Nagaland.
- In addition, the government must step in to protect the socio-economic and cultural lives of the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Naga tribes, and the government should provide them with the feeling that they are a vital organ in Naga society.
- The church must be at the forefront of fighting tribalism and forging an abiding spirit of Naga society. The impact of the church is the only hope for seeking the value of harmony; hence, the church must do a lot more to evaluate its role in promoting positive ethnic relations.

- Proper institutions should be generated that can enhance economic sustainability for both communities.
- More protection of their land and resources should be created to prevent any further conflict between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir communities. Thus, at least the next generation should progress with unity and vigour in Naga society.

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**Annexure 1**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**On**

**LANGUAGE, ETHNIC IDENTITY AND CONFLICT: A CASE STUDY OF  
YIMKHIUNG AND TIKHIR NAGA TRIBE**

**I PERSONAL DATA**

1. Age .....
2. Community .....
3. Dialect- Chirr  Tikhirl  Langa  Makury  Phelunger  Longpfur
4. Gender  
    Female   
    Male
5. Educational qualification  
    a. Non-literate   
    b. Below matriculate   
    c. Matriculate   
    d. Graduate   
    e. Post-Graduate & Above
6. Occupation  
    a) Govt Employee  b) Pvt. Employee  c) Politician   
    d) Church workers  e) Farmers  f) Businessmen   
    g) Other .....
7. Designation .....
8. Home setting of the respondent  
    a) Rural   
    b) Urban
9. Residence .....

**II. CAUSES OF CONFLICT AMONG YIMKHIUNG AND TIKHIR TRIBES IN NAGALAND**

11. Are you aware of the conflict situation in your community?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

If yes, what kind of conflict is in your society? Please explain?

12. According to you, do both dialects, Langa/Tikhir, have the same origin in terms of identity?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

13. Why do communities get fragile after being together in harmony for many decades? Please give reasons.

14. What is the main factor for bringing such community tension in your tribe?

- a) Politics
- b) Land issue
- c) Language
- d) Any other specify .....

Can you explain how?

15. Yimkhiung / Tikhir community is a conflict-torn society

- a) Strongly agree
- b) Agree
- c) Strongly disagree
- d) Disagree

16. Whom to blame for this torn community?

- a) Political leaders
- b) Tribal Council/Association Bodies
- c) Lack of education
- d) Lack of awareness
- e) Other reason, Specify .....

**III. MAIN CAUSES OF LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY CRISIS AMONG  
YIMKHIUNG  
AND TIKHIR TRIBES IN NAGALAND**

17. Did both Tribes' ancestors have adapted multiple languages (dialects) as their identity without having any problems?

- 1) Yes   
2) No   
Please explain?

18. The identity crisis among the Yimkhiung and Tikhir Tribes is strongly associated with Political?

- 1) Yes   
2) No   
Can you explain how?

19. Do you think that language is the only way to preserve your identity?

- 1) Yes   
2) No   
Please give reasons.

20. Do you accept that due to less emphasis on education earlier, now your  
What aspects of the community were lacking in many ways in Naga society?

- 1) Yes   
2) No   
Please give reasons.

21. Does the ethnic conflict results the communities into backward compared to other  
Communities?

- 1)Yes   
2)No   
Please give reason?

**IV. IMPACT ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE OF YIMKHIUNG/ TIKHIR TRIBES**

22. What are the challenges faced by the community due to this conflict?

23. Do you consider yourself to belong to a backwards tribe?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Please give reasons. Why?

24. Are you still in fear for this conflict?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

25. What is that fear? Explain

26. Ethnic issues are impacting the social life of the community in terms of

- 
- a) Family
- b) Youth
- c) Education
- d) Economic
- e) Social culture
- f) Other, specify.....

27. Does this ethnic conflict impact the lives of the youth in the community?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Please explain

28. Does this ethnic conflict impact the social life of the community?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Please explain?

29. How does it impact your family after the conflicts?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Please explain?

30. Did the conflict have an impact on women?

1) Yes

2) No

Explain How?

31. Does the conflict have any impact on children?

1) Yes

2) No

Explain How?

32. Did you migrate to another place due to conflict?

1) Yes

2) No

If yes, where have you shifted after the conflict?

a) Near the village

b) Other village

c) Other District .. .....please mention the place name

Why you shifted to that place?

33. Do you have any plan to return back with family to your pervious village?

If Yes / No why?

35. What was your occupation before community conflict? Is there any change in Occupation pattern after the conflicts?

36. How did you arrange your family economy and other requirement for living after transferred to other place due to conflict?

37. Who to you blame for the delay in social and economic progress in your community?

a) Society

b) Ethnic grievance

c) Government

d) Organization

e) Other, specify.....

38. Have fear and insecurity hampered education among your communities?

1) Yes

2) No

Please give a reason?

39. What was the impact on educational institutions caused by the conflict?

40. Who do you blame for the delay in education progress in your community?

a) Society

b) Ethnic grievance

c) Government

d) Organisation

e) Other

41. Do you think that the bonding between the Yimkhiung and Tikhir community has become stronger or weaker after the conflict? Give the reason

42. Do you think your community can manage the progress and development without solving this conflict and ethnic issue?

1. Yes

2. No

3. Can't say.

Please give reasons.

43. Does violence in society influence the youth's mind to absorb the spirit of violence?

1) Yes

2) No

Please Explain?

44. Are the youth feeling any kind of insecurity due to this social backwardness?

45. Did the church take any kind of initiative in bringing unity among communities after the conflict? Please explain

46. How does the church organise its activities for both communities after the conflict?

## V. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

47. Do you think that this ethnic issue can be solved?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

48. How will you stop this ethnic problem in your community? Please suggest

49. Do you think that education will be the best solution in solving this conflict?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

If yes, please explain?

50. Mention the best traditional practices in solving the ethnic conflict?

51. Are the communities taking any serious action so far on this issue in coming future?

1) Yes

2) No

Explain?

52. Are the student unions/ organizations of your community taking any action to solve these grievances?

1) Yes

2) No

Explain.

53. Do you think that youth associations can be stop this ethnic conflict?

54. Which factor can play an important role in bringing peace and developing an environment in your community?

a) Church bodies

b) Tribal council

c) Student bodies

d) Other

55. In your opinion, is the Dobashi court relevant in solving conflicts?

a) Effective

b) Somewhat Effective

c) Not Effective

d) No opinion

Please explain?

56. In your opinion, is the village council relevant in solving conflicts?

a) Effective

b) Somewhat Effective

c) Not Effective

d) No opinion

Please explain?

Annexure 2

**FIELD PHOTOS**



**Interviews with Dobashi at the Shamator headquarters**



**Interviews with Goanbura and village elder at showuba village in Dimapur district.**



**Interview with Head Gaonbura and Gaonbura in Sangphur Village in the Shamator district.**



**Interview with Head Gaonbura in Shamator village**



**Interview with the village council and elders in Shamator village**



**Interview with village elders and the students' apex bodies in Shamator village**



**Interview with Head Goanbura and Union president of Kiusam Town**



**Interview with Gaonbura and council member of Monteger village**