

The Phom Nagas of Tamlu: Advent of Christianity and Impact of Education on the Society

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Abstract

This work tries to emphasize the impact of Christianity and education brought by the British helped in shaping the Tamlu society and how western education and the new-found religion helped in eradicating the age-old practice of head-hunting which prevailed till the beginning of the 20th century. This work focuses on the origin of the word 'Phom' and how Tamlu village came into existence due to migration of our ancestors from one place to another. Even though the exact date and time could not be located, our past stories has been passed down from generation to generation mainly through poems and folklores which is recited and sung by our people even at present age, speaking volumes of past glories like any other past human glory and civilization. This work also throws light on the pre-colonial and post-colonial social and tribal setup of Tamlu village.

Keywords: *Phom, Tamlu, Britishers, religion, bahng, education.*

Introduction

There are 16 major tribes in Nagaland and the Phom Nagas are one of the major tribe in Nagaland, India. They are also called by the name Tamlu and Chingmeinyu. Phom is the name of both the people and their language. Phom language is spoken in the Longleng ditrict of Nagaland. Longleng is the head-quarter of the Phom people. Longleng administrative centre was established in the year 1950, under the administration of the Tuensang district in an area of around 660 square kilometers. Longleng was under Tuensang district but later on it was bifurcated as a separate district on 24th January 2004 by transferring 3 circles namely Tamlu, Yongnyah and Longleng out of Tuensang district through Government of Nagaland and gained the status of a full-fledged Revenue District headed by the Deputy Commissioner.

Geographically speaking, Longleng is located in the North-eastern part of Nagaland and is bounded by Mon district in the east; Assam's Srinagar district in the North; Tuensang district in the South and Mokokchung district in the West. The district is mountainous with an area of 1066.80 square kilometres and the boundary of the district is well demarcated by natural rivers such as Dikhu with Mokokchung district; Yongmon with Mon district and Nyapa stream with Tuensang district.

Presently, there are forty-three villages in Longleng district namely:

- Ladigarh
- Yonglok
- Namha
- Ngetchongching
- Shetep
- Shemnyiuching
- Apoji
- Buranamsang
- Kongshong (EAC Headquarter)
- Tamlu (ADC Headquarter)
- Ametjong
- Kangching
- Netnyiuching
- Tangha
- Amosen
- Yongshei
- Yungja
- Yongnyah (EAC Headquarter)
- Shemshang

- Chingong
- Chingshang
- Michong
- Phumnyiu
- Orangkong
- Yachem (EAC Headquarter)
- Yaongyimchen
- Noksosang
- Hukphang
- Pongching
- Pongo
- Yongphang
- Sakshi (EAC Headquarter)
- Yangching
- Auching
- Mongkong
- Hamliakang
- Oulem
- Tungkhou
- Lingtak
- Hongnyiu
- Yimchong
- Alayung
- Shanglu

Except for setting up of an outpost with the establishment of a bungalow by the British government at Tamlu, the rest of the Phom area remained un-administered during the British rule. Dr. E.W. Clark, the first Baptist missionary visited Tamlu village between the years 1881-1883, but he could not preach the gospel of Christianity. It was only on September 22, 1929 that the first 3 Phom converts were baptized and Christianity penetrated into majority of the Phom villages thereafter.

The gospel of Christianity was first received by the people of Tamlu village but there was no one who was ready to convert to Christianity that day as they were still inclined to the practice of worship of the sun, the moon, the stars and the sky that was passed down from their ancestors. However, after some few years, six members from Merangkong village and six members from Molung village brought the gospel of Christianity in Tamlu and they arrived at the house of Late. Alaang D.B. The gospel was preached for the second time where the people of Tamlu gathered around the Tangha Bang and listened

to the songs and preachings from the missionaries but even on that day, there was none who was ready to convert.

Again after some few years, there was an enlightenment among a few people of Tamlu village where they came to an understanding that in order to march forward and develop the village, it would be better to accept Christianity as their religion. It was a blessing in disguise when Rev. Supongwati Ao from Impur, Mokochung, arrived at Tamlu to preach the gospel of Christianity. It was on the fateful day of 16 December, 1934 when four people were touched by the preaching of Rev. Supongwati Ao and they decided to accept Christianity and became the first Baptist Christians. The first four Baptist Christians of Tamlu village were Late Mr. Khuhpa, Late Mr. Lunglem, Late Mrs. Wangpung and Late Mrs. Shuje. Furthermore, the coming of the Britishers in the Phom areas led to the ending of a head-hunting era. The Britishers imposed strict law and order in order to end the century old practice of headhunting and made peace treaties with the chiefs of Phom villages. The Britishers introduced western education to the Phom areas which was not successful at first as the villagers were unaware of the benefits that education can provide as they had been, for ages, inclined towards farming as agriculture was their main source of income as well as their livelihood. While the parents were away to toil the fields, the older children had to look after their younger siblings and it was difficult for them to concentrate on what the teachers were teaching them and to look after their younger siblings at the same time. Eventually more schools were set up and gradually the parents started sending more children to schools and thus, education also played a very vital role in shaping the Tamlu society as well as the mindset of the people.

The Tamlu society had class division and according to which the clothes and ornaments were to be worn. Women did not have any say in social gathering nor were allowed to question her husband. Tamlu society followed a patriarchal system where male was the head of the family and all the properties were given to the males of the family. Women had no right to property but it depended upon her father if he wanted to give her a plot of land as a parting gift after her marriage. Women wore mekhala (sarong) at the bottom and necklaces to cover her top while men wore a tiny piece of cloth to cover his intimate areas. Spears and daos were to be with the men at all times because they had to be ready for war with the enemies at any given point of time.

Area of Study

The study area will be Tamlu village under the district of Longleng, Nagaland which is situated in the North-eastern part of India. This research will cover the origin of the Phom people, the advent of Christianity and the impact of education in bringing changes to the ancient social norms and practices in a Tamlu village. This research will help revisit the areas where the ancestors of Tamlu first migrated and started to settle and set up villages along their way.



Image: Census map of India

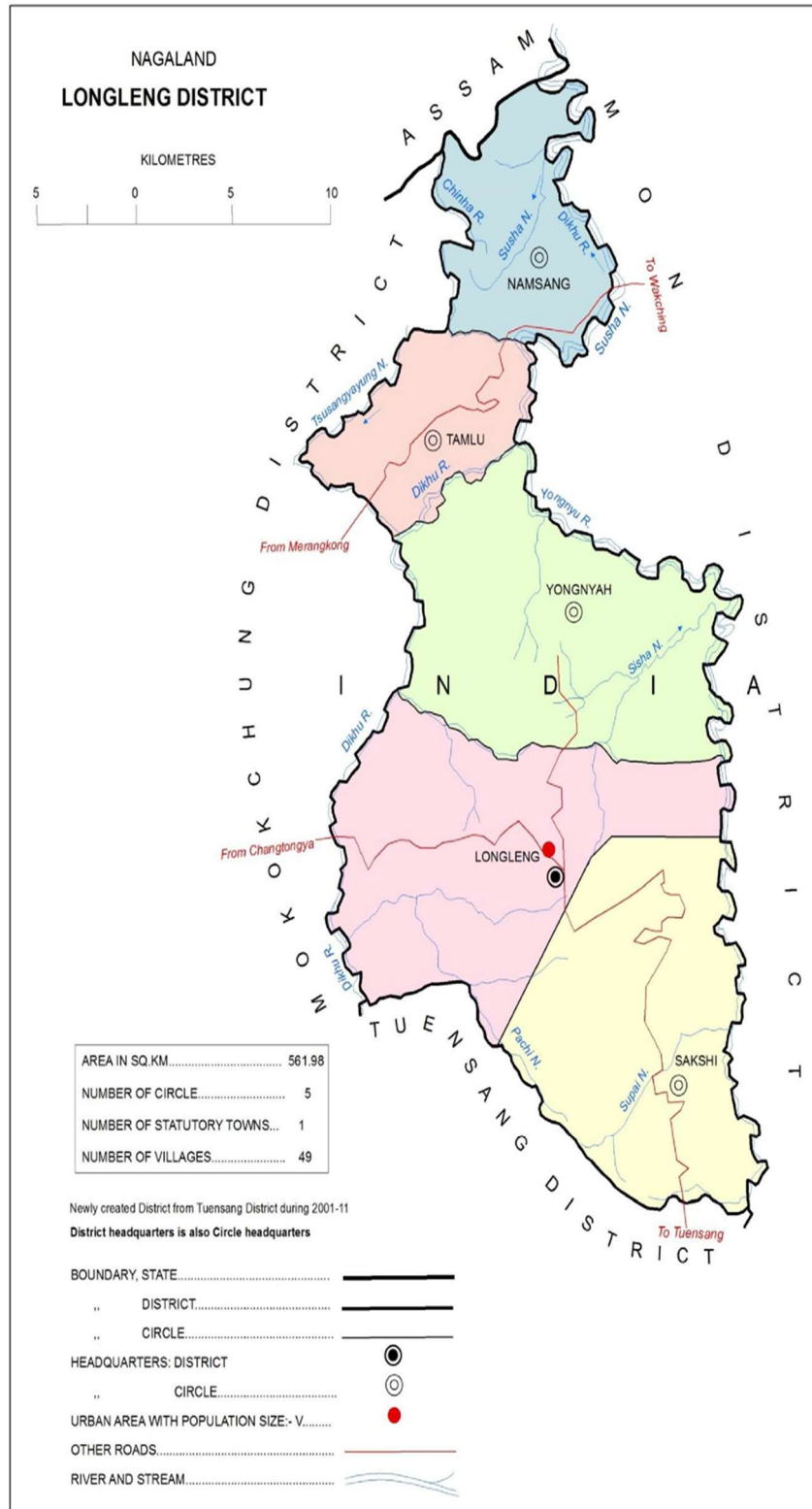


Image: Census map of Nagaland District

Origin of the name 'Phom'

There are differences even among the native people of Longleng about the origin of the name 'Phom'. There are various opinions regarding the origin of its name. Some say it is derived from a beautiful woman named 'Bhumla' which means 'the lady of clouds'. Legends say that she and her husband had many offsprings and their descendants were called 'Phom'. Some say that the name was given by the Britishers after the word 'Bhum' which means 'cloud'. They gave this name because the Phom areas were mostly covered by clouds even on sunny days, especially during winters. Hence, the attribution as "the land of clouds."

There is another narrative regarding the name 'Phom'. It says that the name 'Phom' came from the word 'Bham' which means rubber tree. It is said that when the Britishers asked about the name of the tree, the natives replied that it was called 'Bham' and thus, the name 'Phom' came into existence.

The difference in the approach of the origin of the word 'Phom' makes it difficult to give definite meaning to the name 'Phom' nor it is possible to accurately say to which tradition it actually belongs to but the Phoms accept the name proudly and keep the name 'Phom' as theirs.

Origin and Evolution of Tamlu Village

The origin of Tamlu village dates back to some thousands of years when the people living in Apaihong separated from each other where some group went to seek the beautiful place where the sun rays were in abundance. This place was known as "Yingnyunshang". Some group reached the place and started to settle there. During this era, the people worshipped the sun, the stars and the rocks for a very long time and lived together with the wild animals. Gradually, the human population expanded in the passage of time.

They cleared the forests and started to build huts and lived a settled life. They knew how to cultivate and thus, grew their own crops and fed themselves from these crops. Since time immemorial, they lived together as families where there were two or three men and two to three women therefore, the concept of joint family existed during this era and they lived in harmony. The people started to form various organizations and they loved the society and did everything to develop their society. They formed the customary laws for brotherhood and had immense respect for one another. They also set up laws which stated that everyone who belonged to the society would all be wrapped around together under one hand and every work would be overseen by one Loung (chief) who is chosen by the people and in this way the new seeds borne out of the people would be known as Phom.

During this period, the offsprings of Phomnyuha (cloud lady) and Khah ha (simple man) parted ways to start their own villages. There is a song written regarding the separation of the offsprings which goes on like this:

"Apaihongma yanpu yangmoi bangnyuha

Obu yungnyu shangma phongjan teplingpang.
 Jawan hokpong belem haei kuphiom
 Nyemuang pongkup haei lengshu chingyang ma.
 Tanghi hompong pongma jeishu nauyanapeih
 Jeilo nauman yanpu oyang phunyu yen
 Shaei teilao phangma ngoi”

This song translated into English goes like this

“Our ancestors descend from Apaihong
 Families began at Mount Yingnyushang
 Toil land and forest, are our citadel.
 Nyemnyiu captured, heard our street
 Crying child see Nyemnyiu appearing across regions
 Jeilok and Nauman brothers depart at Dikhu river
 And reach the shore of the river Brahmaputra”

During this separation from each other it is believed that the people attained wisdom for the second time and there is a poem composed for this attainment of wisdom which goes like this

“Aiwang hahjai yanglongma
 Apheihshangpa vannya dangnyu nyi denma
 Dauha peikha jone weplong jongma yong
 Himlong lo hi lemi shangkham anyu jai
 Yawan shokpongpa vonglangkao
 Nyeilang han-ou mong
 Nyiamthing shangnyu jone honwang nyahyem yep
 Jahpan tokma oumong konshaipu jongku
 Jahpan dokma pokpak laiyem pu jongma
 Yinghong phaknyu shama chunai shangmen mah
 Pongnya longshon jone
 Yimlang mei ma yu
 Kha ou yanglep pulei veihah”

This poem is about two lovers Apeihshangpa (boy) and Vannyadangnyu (girl). The girl’s parents asked many impossible tasks to the boy in order to get her hand in marriage. He completed all the tasks accordingly but still the girl’s parents refused and finally they decided to end their lives on the top branch of a tree. The translation of the poem in English goes like this

“Long time ago, there lived two lovers
 Apheihshangpa and Vannya Dangnyu
 Toiled to cut down the tree by chisel
 Mother secretly gives an axe

Task, hooper bird on reindeer horn,
 Metallic fishing net to catch fish alive
 Task, basket of livers from forest birds
 To collect sixty hole-less leaves from the forest
 Alas! Tragic end of the lovers at tree branch
 Spotted lovers where the sounds of
 Flapping wings of scavengers were heard”

The people of Tamlu settled down at Chingmeinyiu in between 847 A.D. - 1478 A.D. After five centuries, they left the Chingmeinyiu by the end of 1478 A.D. due to come misunderstandings amongst themselves. They scattered to different villages like Kangching, Tangha, Yongshei and Yongnyah.

Some of the Chingmeinyiu villagers took shelter in Yongnyah. After nearly five years of settlement, the leaders of the Chingmeinyiu who settled down in Yongnyah – Shri Benjong, Shri Metlong and Shri Bangyan initiated to go back to the land of their forefathers called Vauching hong (Vauching range). According to reports, Shri Benjong went to Wauching village for making dao (machete) from a blacksmith called Metna. There Metna asked Shri Benjong the name of his village to which Benjong replied that he was from Chingmeinyiu village but presently settled at Yongnyah village at Thamje Bahng (Thamje Morung). Shri Benjong told him that he now planned on going back to his ancestral land for resettlement but the leaders of the Tangha Bahng in Yongnyah village, Shri Nauman did not agree saying that the land belonged to him and that no one can settle there and that the land should be vacant only for the wild animals and birds. Metna of Wauching village suggested that Benjong should go and request Nauman to allow him to settle in Chingmeinyiu with the promise that Nauman would be made the leader amongst them and take charge as Loung (chief).

Accordingly, Benjong went and narrated the same to Nauman to which Nauman finally accepted the offer and Metna was informed about the good news from Benjong. But there was another problem regarding the settlement of the people of Tauhai village. Benjong and Nauman asked them to settle at Chingshushang and Yongtoilongshang but this request was rejected by the Tauhai villagers. So an agreement was made that the people of Tauhai village led by Tongmeth and Henkong and Nauman and Benjong that both the group would settle and live together at Vauchinghong (now Tamlu).

Accordingly, the two groups settled at Vauchinghong. The name Vauchinghong was given by Nauman of Tangha Bahng of Yongnyah village because the place was covered by Tangha Bahng of Yongnyah village. Finally with the consultation of Yongnyah and Wauchung, all the groups settled down and called the land Tamlu village.

In the beginning only the Tangha Bahng was constructed and they all lived together but gradually Oungh Bahng and Munglen Bahng were created. Following are the names of the founding members of the formation of the village:

- Shri Benjong Yongnyah

- Shri Metlong Yongnyah
- Shri Bangyan Yongnyah
- Shri Henkong Tauhai
- Shri Tongmeth Tauhai

The following are the names of Loungs (Chiefs) of different villages:

- Shri Nauman – Yongnyah Tangha Bahng
- Shri Phaben – Yongnyah Thamje Bahng
- Shri Leiwang – Wauching Angpan
- Shri Metyong – Wakching Bala

Pre-colonial period in Tamlu

Before the advent of Britishers in Nagaland, the practice of head-hunting was common among the Nagas especially in the eastern part of Nagaland. This practice of taking heads was not only a symbol of masculinity and power but mostly as an act to conquer territories as well as to protect one. Every tattoo in the body of the warriors especially the chest area, was a mark of the number of enemies they beheaded and it was a sign of prestige and honor. There were clashes among the neighbouring Phom areas and in such situation, every villager was expected to stay focused and courageous so that they were ready to face the enemies with their sharpened daos and spears at any given point of time. The heads of the enemies were collected as trophies and were piled up in the house of the *Loung* (chief of the village). For centuries the people of Tamlu lived such a hard life and the practice of head-hunting was contributing more to the misery of the people. Since agriculture was the main source of livelihood, the villagers would go to the fields early before sunrise and return by dusk. There were men who guarded those women who tended to the field for the fear of sudden and unannounced attack by the enemies.

The Phom people of Tamlu village practiced paganism before the advent of Christian missionaries. They worshipped the sun, the stars, the moon and the sky. They practiced certain laws and norms such as the marriage system and sacred ceremonies. Before the wave of Christianity touched the people of Tamlu, they practiced a different marriage system. When the parents decide for marriage of their children, they chose those whose parents were both alive. During the pre-engagement they give one *Langha* (brass plate) and if there was no formal refusal of the marriage within one year then the family of both the couples go to the field of the boy, have a feast and in the evening, they returned to the village to assemble at the boy's residence. The boys of the same age group of the boy who was newly married, along with his clan girls came singing and dancing led by the girl whose parents were still alive. The night of the marriage was filled with merry making and feasting the whole night. After the completion of five days, on the sixth day the head of the clan come with one cock and six spotless wrapping leaves

and he tied the hair of both the bride and the groom and asked them to sit in front of the house porch. The leader of the clan would swing the cock upon them and pronounce that the new family may live long and their love may grow endlessly like cane and prayed to his god for blessing of the new family and from that day onward, they became husband and wife officially.

The non-Christian practices which were considered as taboo were still prevalent even after Christianity was accepted by the village. When a child was born, the parents observed six days for naming the boy child and five days for the girl child. When a member of a particular family died due to accident like drowning in the water, fell from the tree or killed by a wild animal then that particular family would stay indoors for six days and were not allowed to go out beyond the village gate. Throughout the year there were several sacred days which were solemnly observed and they were”

- *Moiveum Nyeu*: This particular day was observed as a day of thanksgiving for the seeds sown in the field for a bountiful harvest.
- *Moha Nyeu*: The community observed this day as a day of offering food to the skulls of chosen animals killed during the *Monyiu* festival as an act to sanctify the festival.
- *Pungveum Nyeu*: On this day the community observed pre-harvest prayer thanksgiving for a successful and surplus food grain.
- *Pangmo*: The community observed this day as a day of social work by cleaning the footpaths and this day is observed as a signal for the harvest to begin.
- *Monyiu Nyeu*: *Monyiu* is one of the biggest festival of the Phom Nagas where several rites and rituals were carried out. The festival lasts for eight days and each day has its own significance. They are:

Day one: *Shongten Laiphen* which is the preliminary preparation for the festival.

Day two: *Aiha Oushok* where the festival of the same aged group of boys and girls begin.

Day three: *Chingi Oushok* is when the village celebrates *Monyiu*

Day four: *Yenthu* which is the arrival of guests from different villages to celebrate *Monyiu*.

Day five: *Chingthum* is when the entire village celebrates.

Day six: *Yenyan* is when the guests from other villages get ready for their departure after *Monyiu* festival.

Day seven: *Chingshu Nyeu* is when the community cleans the village after a weeklong celebration.

Day eight: *Kahvam* is the last day of *Monyiu* festival which is held in the respective fields of all the villagers.

The *Monyiu* festival marks the change of season and whatever was produced by the villagers by their own hands were shared among their families, friends and loved ones. It was a time for renewing the relationship and the respect for the leaders and elders. The entire village anticipated for the next *Monyiu*. The Naga society, the Tamlu village in particular has, since time immemorial, been a patriarchal society where the male is considered the head of the family. Though the women were considered inferior due to their physical inferiority as compared to men, both men and women of the village bore deep respect

for one another. The women were expected to stay at home and to look after the children and the household while their husbands were away for gathering food and for defending the village. The women had no say during social gatherings and was not allowed to question their husband. However, despite the social differences, the Phom men deeply loved and respected their women and their children. The women of the high class families were adorned with ornaments and headgear and there was a particular mekhela which was to be worn only by the noble class women which was called “*Shaka*”. The lower class women also wore ornaments but they were not as fancy as the ones of the high class women as they could not afford it. The men wore a piece of cloth to cover their intimate area and wore the tooth of the wild animal which they had killed as a necklace. The quality of the shawl which they wrapped around them depended on the amount of money they were willing to spend therefore, the rich could afford a better shawl as compared to the poor. The property was given only to the male child, most preferably the eldest male child. The daughters after their marriage leave their parents and live with her husband but the sons would stay and look after their parents and thus, it was only fair for the sons to inherit the property because the responsibility was huge for the sons when their parents could no longer feel the strength to carry on. Also, after marriage the daughters acquired the surname of her husband while the sons were to keep the legacy of their clan for generations to come.

Colonial Period in Tamlu Village

When the British officials first reached Tamlu, they were afraid of the situation as the practice of head-hunting was still rampant. They had similar experience with the other Nagas as well. After several attempts for negotiations, the British officials then offered a peace treaty to the people of Tamlu where both the parties would live together in peace and harmony. They set up rules and regulations and began their quest for imparting education. Eventually, the people of Tamlu were tired of the life they were living; the bloodshed and enmity among their own neighbours and thus, the practice of head-hunting was abolished on 6 June, 1952 which marked an end to all head-hunting practices and enmity among the Phom Nagas and to this day, 6 June, the Phom Nagas celebrate “Phom Day” annually to commemorate it as Peace Making Day. This day is also declared as public holiday for the Phoms by the State Government.

Education in Tamlu Village during Colonial Period

Education is one of the most vital source for social change, modernization and economic development. Every society undergoes changes in various kinds of activities. The nature, quality and form of change that occur rests on the individuals of the society. The function of education is to make an individual live a worthy life, to establish a harmonious and peaceful society. Education is the potent weapon for progress and prosperity of a society. It is the major instrument for the transformation of the society.

Education in the Phom areas during the pre-British or pre-colonial period was in the form of dormitory system known as Bahng (morung) which was a place for unmarried men and it served as an important learning centre. The youths were trained and given instructions on all the aspects of life and imparted the age old tribal traditions like discipline, hard work, the spirit of service, community life, singing, dancing, cultural aspects of society, rules and regulations, religious get-together, weddings, etc.

The light of western education stepped down in Tamlu village in 1884 introduced by the British Gorkha Troops. In the following year the first government primary school was opened in the village where Assamese was the medium of learning under the teacher-ship of Late Maroram but the achievement could not be done as the people did not understand the new system of education so after a period of six years the school was closed down.

The second attempt to provide education was introduced in the village in 1910 under the teacher-ship of Late Imtiakum Ao of Merangkong village but the people still did not understand the reality of education as only young children were sent to learn but that also only for a year or two. Therefore, the government closed the school in 1915 as it became dysfunctional and the village was left without any learning institution for nearly twenty-one years.

The third attempt to open the school was in 1936 under the teacher-ship of Phen-e of Tamlu village but again due to the political movement in Nagaland the school was closed down in 1955.

The fourth attempt was after a gap of more than eight years and it was only in 1967 that the school was established and there were three primary schools in the village. Therefore, the advancement remained very low.

Advent of Christianity in Tamlu during the Colonial Period

Religion plays an important role in the identity of a particular given region where it decides and dictates the lifestyle of the people in terms of their social practice, beliefs, religious practices, etc. The early people of Tamlu believed in the Supreme God called *Yongnganba* or *Kahvang* (God) and they believed *Yongnganba* is the God of heaven and earth and also the living and the dead. They worshipped the sun, the stars, the moon and the sky. They understood *Yongnganba* to be a male and he is the god of justice and judgement. They worshipped without any documentary proof for many centuries, till Christianity seeped into the village.

Dr E.W. Clark, the first Baptist missionary from America visited Tamlu village in the first week of May 1881, but he could not preach the gospel of Christianity. His mission was to impart peace and also lay the foundation of Christianity in the village but he stayed only for one night and left the village. It was only on 22 September, 1929 that the first three Phom converts were baptized and Christianity penetrated into majority of the Phom villages thereafter.

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sun, the moon, the stars and the sky that was passed down from their ancestors. However, after some few years six members from Merangkong village and six members from Molung village brought the gospel of Christianity in Tamlu and they arrived at the house of Late. Alaang D.B. The gospel was preached for the second time where the people of Tamlu gathered around the Tangha Bahng and listened to the songs and preaching's from the missionaries but even on that day, there was none who was ready to convert.

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Post-Colonial Period in Tamlu Village

Until 1951, the form of education among the Phom community was indigenous and for the first time in 1953 a school came into existence. This marks the beginning of modern education in Tamlu. Till the 1970s the students used to receive middle school level education at Longleng and for matric and higher level education they had to go to the nearest educational centre located in different parts of Nagaland or other neighbouring states of India. After a gap of twenty years, that is in the year 1972 a high school was established in the Phom area. Computer literacy programme was introduced in Phom Lempong, Longleng only in the year 1999.

The rapid growth of modern education is observed with the establishment of Longleng and Tamlu as two sub-headquarters in 1951 and 1958 respectively. Before 1950s Bahng was prevalent in Phom areas and primary and middle schools existed only till 1971. Highschool came into existence only in 1972 and in 1992 higher education in the form of college came into existence. Tamlu was not attaining the status of an educated society. However, there are still much improvements needed to boost the education system in Tamlu village and other Phom areas.

The contribution of both the education put forward by the British administration and Christian missionaries proved to be a blessing for the people of Phom area. There was no longer any superstitious beliefs and other ancestral ceremonial practices. However, one cannot imply that the transformation happened overnight and that the process was smooth sailing as soon as it was implied. Transformation of such societies which have been following the ancient rituals and savage practice such as head-hunting

takes a lot of effort, perseverance and dedication on the side of the one who wants to achieve such big changes. The need for reciprocity is also a key ingredient to achieving such transformation and the people of Tamlu were wise to put aside their age-old practices and beliefs and accepting Christianity and making way for modern education. However, there are certain traditions and practices which cannot be ruled out from the ancient practices as these ancient norms have kept the sanctity and unity of the people intact.

Tamlu in the Modern Age and its Tribal Aspects

Tamlu village has come this far from being a head-hunting society to a peaceful society; from believing in superstitious and worshipping nature to a full-fledged believers of Christianity; from an uneducated society to an educated society. There are still many aged people who have witnessed the transition of Tamlu from a backward to a developed society and all the myths, legends and folklore are only preserved in their memory. All the stories of great men and women are passed down from these aged people as a form of oral history or just as tales of a once glorified past of head-hunting and its miseries which left hundreds of women as widows and children without a father.

The advent of Christian missionaries and British education in Phom areas especially Tamlu Village has proved to be a blessing in disguise for the modern age. The tireless efforts by several leaders and village heads to preserve the unity and peace amongst the Phom people since time immemorial cannot be measured and the people are ever grateful for their hard-work and dedication.

At present Tamlu village have three Bahng- Tangha Bahng, Oungh Bahng and Munglen Bahng. There are roads constructed for cultivation which also connects neighboring villages. The following are the names of the road:

- Lautok lem(road) – chingakh (the route where Tamlu was first formed) road
- Yangthang lem – connecting Assam
- Shulong lem – cultivation road
- Nyahlok lem – cultivation road
- Kongshoung lem – connecting Ao areas
- Shingha lem – connecting to Shingha river
- Mainga lem – connecting Yongnyah village
- Mangmah lem – connecting Namsang village
- Yong lem – cultivation land

The following are the rivers which touches the boundaries of Tamlu village:

- Lainyeiyen river
- Phunyhien river
- Shinghayen river
- Shinyeiyen river

The following are the cultivating lands of Tamlu village:

- Nangmah yim
- Kublem yim
- Lautok yim
- Shumang yim
- Chingphang kongshong yim
- Shingha yim
- Nyahlok yim
- Shulong yim
- Yonglem yim

Tamlu village like any other villages of the Nagas chose their habitation on the mountain tops for reason of security and health. The village is divided into khels(morung). The morung is being administered by the organisation of the bahng or morung itself. The villagers consist of phahng or clans. The villagers are united the authority of village council headed by village council chairman, the village as a whole is a unit and acts as such in all matters. The law of the land and village is under customary laws and all social activities is under customary laws. When the person of the village commits any wrong or mistake, he or she will be punished or even expelled from the village

The Tamlu village construct Bahng or morung for the young ages between 18 to 25 years. We may call it bachelor's house or dormitory. All bachelors of the village slept together in this house. They guard the villagers from all eventualities lines attack from others and also performed security duties.

Villages also used to construct girls dormitory and they all slept together for their safety and security until they got married they slept their together.

Morung and the dormitory is just like an institution where they acquired the knowledge of from their elders, they also learned the handicraft works. Therefore, the morung is like the institution and learning centre of the younger generation.

At present, several festivals are celebrated in a year but *Monyiu* is the greatest among them and is celebrated from April 1-6 every year. Traditionally it is a 12-day festival, which marks the end of winter and the onset of summer. The festival involves community feasting, dancing, singing and social works such as repairing and construction of bridges. During the festival, the men present their married daughters or sisters with pure rice beer and special food to show their affection and respect.

One or two days before the festival, its arrival is signaled by the beating of log drums with a distinctive tune called *Lan Nyangshem*. The priest or the village elders predict whether the festival would bring a blessing or a curse.

Another significant occasion for the Phom Nagas is the celebration of “Phom Day” on June 6 every year commemorating the Peace Making Day that was signed in June 3 1952 that states as follows

“To witness this Day

When all Phoms have pledged

Themselves to be Peaceful and

Loyal to Government”

This marked the end to all headhunting practices and enmity among the Phom Nagas. This day is also declared as public holiday for the Phoms by the State Government.

Conclusion

There is an immense amount of changes that has happened in the village of Tamlu. Despite the people accepting Christ as their saviour and Christianity as their religion, the practices which are followed during festivals such as the elders predicting the outcome of the festival still shows that some of the ancient social practices are still being followed. There are changes in the marriage system in the present day. The marriage system before the advent of Christianity was practiced so rigidly by the people as they did not want to violate any social practices which were followed by our forefathers and worshipped them with much reverence. When Christianity dawned into the village, old practices were abandoned and the people began to live a new life and move forward with Christ as their saviour and friend. Marriages are now held with the consent of the parents as well as the children. When a marriage proposal is put forward before the church, the church will fix the date and time of marriage and recommend the church deacons to witness the Holy Matrimony according to the doctrine of the Bible that says “Whosoever unite them in God, no man shall separate them”. The marriage ceremony is solemnized by the Pastor and the congregation prays for the well-being and prosperity of the newly wedded couple who has now embarked on a new journey to start a family of their own.

The coming of modern education which was brought by the British and the advent of Christianity really did prove to be a blessing in disguise because all these factors led to the development of the present day scenario where children are getting education and a society

where men and women are treated equally. There is also leniency in the distribution of property and land among the children. During the ancient days, only the males were entitled to the property but now in the modern age there is no such instance where there has been disputes amongst the siblings for the entitlement of property. The Phom people have always been a good example of peace and harmony and there is immense respect and honour for each other.

In the present day, the people of Tamlu follows the Christian belief where everyone is entitled to work for six days and rest on the seventh day, that is Sunday. Although the community has done away with the old social practices, in order to know the change of season and to feel connected to our roots, *Monyiu* festival is celebrated with enthusiasm, love, joy, peace and prosperity. Days and years passes by, season changes, but the people of Tamlu village still remember the feeling of pure joy when they accepted Christianity and chose Christ as their personal saviour. Modernity replaced old structures of the society but we know through the budding of new trees and flowers and new born animals and birds, it all implies us the good news of the gospel that came to us and therefore, we must all remain in humility.

Acknowledgement

First of all I would like to thank the Almighty God for His blessings throughout the whole research work. This work would not have been completed without the help of numerous people who have been kind enough to comment on various fields. I would like to thank Dr. Dinesh Kumar, my Supervisor who was always ready to make time to help me during the course of my research. I would also like to thank my mother Mrs. P. Manyau and my father Mr. Wangkup Shukha for the encouragement, the moral support, and providing material resources and financial assistance during the course of my research work. My heartfelt gratitude goes to Mr. B. Phongshak Phom and Mr. Phongchang Nyiam for their tireless efforts to translate indigenous language into English. I would like to thank my fellow peers for their encouragement and endless support without whom this work would not have been successful. Lastly, I would like to thank Lovely Professional University and various organizations for giving me this platform to conduct this research.

Declaration

This research is the result of my own independent work/investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by giving explicit references

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