

**MUSICKING AND CHANGE IN THE NAGA HILLS:  
A STUDY OF HAO-TANGKHUL MUSICAL PRACTICES**

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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DECLARATION

I, Pamyo chamroy, declare that this thesis entitled, “**Musicking and Change in the Naga Hills: A Study of Hao-Tangkhul Musical Practices,**” submitted by me, in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is my bonafide work. The thesis has not been previously submitted, either in part or as whole, for any other degree of this university or any other university.

  
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*For The People*

*&*

*For His Glory*

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## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

*“Songs, they are words  
words, they are songs  
a history simply told in songs.”<sup>1</sup>*

These poignant lines by Stephen Angkang allude to the significance of music in the life of the Nagas. In the distant past, it was in their songs and tales, that their history and culture were etched, sung, retold, and passed on to the younger generations—as collective memoirs and narratives of their people. Their songs were the conduits that eternally connected them to their history and enabled them to look forward to the future. So, storytelling and singing were much more than exercises for entertainment; rather it was a sacred trust that old men passed on before their death (Horam 1977). In the absence of any written literature, songs became a means of preserving the narratives of their people. Their songs and their practices of music were also shaped by their distinct identity, and deeply embedded within a worldview. In fact, their musical practice was a way of living it.

But it would be naive to think that the Nagas are insulated from the rest of the world and that their musical expressions and narratives remain untouched. Today, they have come a long way from their hills when their villages were their world; the forest, their hunting ground; agriculture, the catalyst of their life patterns; and propitiating the spirits, perhaps their closest semblance to a religion. The Nagas, labeled once as ‘headhunters’ and ‘savages’ by Western scholars, missionaries, and administrators, are now very much a part of the modern world. In the 21st century, therefore, within the context of the scale of transformations wrought by the onslaught of technology, nation-state system, and the global cultural flows that have permeated to various nooks and corners of the world, this dissertation seeks to explore the interactions of these flows with the traditional conceptions of aesthetics, practices of music and cultural expressions of the Nagas.

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<sup>1</sup> This quotation is referenced from Stephen Angkang’s interview in Oinam Doren’s film, *Songs of Mashangva*, 2011. Angkang was a former president of the ‘Tangkhul Naga Long,’ the highest apex body of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas.



In this venture to study the musical practices of the Nagas (as any other society), it was important to be cognizant of the dangers of imposing alien conceptions and theories that originated in a specific context, in a given society, and are perhaps located spatially and materially at different junctures. As Peter Manuel in *'Ethnomusicology'* states, the initial problems and challenges of cross-cultural study of music aesthetics pertain to the definition, delimitation, or identification of concepts of *aesthetics* and even *music*. A vast realm of expressive activities gets eliminated by conceptualizing a restrictive modern notion of art or music as denoting entities produced solely for aesthetic pleasure, free from any overt social function. Manuel also contends that the advent of modernity has had dramatic effects on traditional music cultures worldwide—the most overt change being “*aestheticization process*”—an emphasis of music that is purely recreational in nature and thus largely free of “functional” considerations that might condition the form and meaning of work songs, religious music, life-cycle commemorations, praise songs, etc (Manuel 2011).

In the context of the Nagas, such an awareness of the limitations of modern conceptions and terminologies of music is crucial, as the early musical practices of the Nagas might not necessarily be easily categorized or understood under modern musical idioms. And also the fact that music being deeply entrenched and shaped by its intersections with the economic, social, political, and religious life of the Nagas, one ought to take into consideration the changing conditions of the Naga society. Today, the Nagas who were a predominantly agrarian based society till the early twentieth century, now have a sizeable population who no longer necessarily engage in farming as a means of livelihood; nor is the spatial location of the Nagas necessarily confined in their ancestral domains any longer. In fact, a sizeable population of the Nagas, especially the youth, are now spread out in the metropolitan cities of India, as well as abroad—to seek modern education, employment opportunities, and so on. The political setup of the Naga society has also significantly changed. Unlike the sovereign autonomy of every village, as practiced in the past, for several decades, now they have been collectively negotiating their place in the nation-state system—aspiring for a nation of their own. Furthermore, most of the Nagas also no longer believe in propitiating the many spirits that their ancestors used

to. In fact, the majority of the various Naga tribes now profess Christian faith,<sup>2</sup> and to a large extent, Christianity influences many aspects of their lives.

With all these changes in their society it shouldn't be a surprise if their musical practices have transformed significantly over the years, but what is noteworthy is the extent to which Western musical styles have influenced their contemporary musical practices. To a large extent, Western music and contemporary popular-cultural mode of music practice are now their dominant musical expression. It is no longer an aberration to say that the Naga youths as of today, are better versed in popular Western music over their ancestral musical practices. In fact, there are now very few practitioners of their traditional music. As such, many of their traditional folk songs and dances are relegated to stage presentations in few festive occasions. These phenomena of disembedding of their folk/traditional songs and dances, the acculturation of singing 'special' numbers (songs) in Church congregation and aping popular music culture, have also led to an adoption of the Western notion of a proscenium. This has introduced amongst the Nagas, the practice of a distinct separation of music performers and producers from that of the audience. So, it a change not just in terms of adopting new musical styles but even the mode of musical practice itself has transformed.

But to trace and understand these changes in their society, perhaps, locating the trajectory of changes in the Naga society has to be traced from the context of their encounter with Christianity and Colonialism—as these are the intertwined factors that have brought about huge shifts and transformations in the social, political, economic and religious life of the Nagas, which consequently impacted their musical practices. As Thong pointed out, the contact between Euro-American West and colonized peoples that began with the era of European colonization and still continuing today in an age of globalization has had grave cultural, political, physical and psychological consequences for the colonized. In the context of the Nagas, he laments that the Nagas and their worldview were dismissed, stereotyped and demonized by the former British colonial power. As a result, today much of their worldview has been skewed, altered or replaced by their colonizers'

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<sup>2</sup> Majority of the Nagas are protestant Baptists. Besides the Baptists, there are several other denominations: Seven Day Adventist, Church of Christ, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, etc.

worldview. Thus leading to the erosion of Naga cultural and political structures (Thong 2016).

In legitimizing the colonization of colonized peoples, imperial powers put forward the notion of “civilizing” “savage peoples” as “the white man’s burden.” As Edward Said elucidates, colonial powers necessitate the creation of the “Other,” “the Oriental,” to set themselves apart as superior from all the non-European peoples and culture. The Orient is conceptualised to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience—a systematic way by which European culture or the West was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient/Other—politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively (Said 2003). Similarly, in the context of Nagas, the colonial power in order to justify their colonial rule, conjectured the Nagas as “headhunters” and “savages” to be civilized and tamed. And in this “civilizing mission,” the role of Christian missionaries were entrenched. Wherever the colonial powers were planted, there inevitably followed Christian missions. The general assumption being that the colonial expansion to the non-Christian world was believed to be God’s providence; it was regarded as opportunities for propagating the Gospel to the “heathen” world.<sup>3</sup>

The conversion of many Nagas to Christianity was a pivotal transition in the lifeworld of the Nagas, as it was not only a transformation in their religious and spiritual life, but it was also the catalyst for structural changes in their society. The process of conversion to a new faith not only entailed a change in one’s religious affiliation, but it also involved a process of negotiation and redefinition of one’s social, cultural, religious and political lifeworld. Mepfhü-o directs attention to the fact that the Christian missionaries undertook the task of remaking the lifestyle of the Naga converts in order to forge a new Naga Christian self, imbibing a new moral body and consciousness. As she narrates, the missionaries’ imposition of abstinence on drinking not only affected the individual life of the converts but also on the community life at large, by reordering social institutions and forms of interaction between individuals within the community. Since rice beer was a part

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<sup>3</sup> Vashum, Y. “Colonialism, Christian Mission and Indigenous: An Examination from Asian Indigenous,” *Biblical Studies.org.uk*. Accessed August 14, 2016. [http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jcta/07-03\\_vashum.pdf](http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jcta/07-03_vashum.pdf). In this paper, he suggests that the analytical study of the connections between the colonial project and missionaries is crucial to problematizing the theological context of the Asian people vis-à-vis the influences of colonization and missionization.

of the staple diet of the Nagas, it was integral to every activity of the village. Therefore, abstinence from rice beer meant the withdrawal of the converts from participating in many aspects of community life. Further, the sartorial changes that were necessitated by the missionaries led to an emergence of Naga Christians as “visible bodies of change and challenge to existing social institutions,” as the missionaries also did away with the status and symbolical meanings associated with the traditional attires of the Nagas as ‘heathen’ sartorial representations (Mepföhü-o 2016). Thus, the conversion to Christianity necessitated a new way of being—a new identity and a transformed way of living that are in collision with the traditional, social, religious and cultural practices of the Nagas.

It is in the backdrop of such discourse that this research has attempted to look into aspects of the Nagas’ encounters with Christianity and Colonialism, and how the changes that ensued affected their musical practices—with special reference to the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas. Further, the effort in this research has also been to understand their contemporary musical practices by contextualizing their past history, not just their encounter with Christianity and Colonialism, but also in the context of a new historical position of the Nagas being in India—with particular reference to the influence of Hindi film songs in Hao-Tangkhuls music practice. In this effort, attempts have been made to study the transformation of their musical practice by taking into account the increasing mobility of the Hao-Tangkhuls, the impact of global cultural flows and its consequent impact on their self-imaginings, in everyday life.

## **Literature Review**

### **(i) Musicking**

*“The apparent thing “music” is a figment, an abstraction of the action, whose reality vanishes as soon as we examine it at all closely.” (Small 1988,2).*

Christopher Small’s statement on music highlights the complicated issue that arises when one engages in a discourse on music. One can’t help but ask what exactly does one mean when one refers to music. It is doubtful that one can give an encapsulated definition of music, neither can a singular conception of music be applicable in every society. In fact, such an attempt will be limiting in the study of musical expressions, as the world comprises

of various communities and societies, located at varying material and spatial junctures—with varied notion of aesthetics and expressions. Perhaps, the more inclusive and enriching approach is to be open minded to the pluralities of conceptualizing and approaching music, as theorized by various scholars from diverse fields, and attune it in one's own context.

In his noted book, *'How Musical is Man?'*, Blacking defines music as “humanly organized sound.” He contends that even though different societies have different ideas about what they regard as music and that they are all based on the consensus of opinion about the principles on which the sounds of music should be organized. That music cannot exist unless at least some human beings possess, or have developed, “a capacity for structured listening.” Thus musical performance, as distinct from the production of noise, is inconceivable without the perception of order in sound. He further urges that music cannot be understood as a thing in itself, as musical things are not always strictly musical and that no musical style has “its own terms.” Rather, its terms are the terms of its society and culture, and of the bodies of the human beings who listen to it and create and perform it (Blacking 1977). Musicologist Patrick Burke, on the other hand, considers the definition of music as “humanly organized sound” too broad. He is of the view that the many sounds inadvertently or indirectly organized by humans don't necessarily qualify as music and so he would rather refer to music as “those sounds that people call music” (Burke 2015).

On similar lines, sociologists William G. Roy and Timothy J. Dowd argue that the distinction made by scholars between music and not music is ultimately a “social construct.” They rather posits music as one that is shaped by, and shapes, social arrangements, and cultural assumptions. That music can be conceptualized as both an *object*, “a thing that has a moment of creation, a stability of characteristics across time and place, and potential for use and effects” (Roy & Dowd 2010, 184), as well as an *activity*. Music's object-ness, its embeddedness in institutions, its pervasiveness in everyday life, its popularity as an avocation, and its affirmation in a discourse of transcendent sanctification, make it an accessible exemplar of the process of social construction. As an activity, they suggests that music can be understood by treating it as something that is “always becoming” but never achieving full object status—music as a verb, rather than a noun. However, they also caution that treating music as merely an object or an activity, risk treating it as self-contained, rather than as part of, and “inseparable from social life.”

That people use music to give meaning to themselves, their world and music both signals and helps in constituting the identity of individuals and collectivities (Roy & Dowd 2010). Similarly, Harry Witchel in *'You Are What You Hear'* posits that music leads to a sense of belonging to a group, a culture or even to an outlook. In humans, like in birds, “music reinforces territory,” and whoever controls the music, it is they who control the territory (Witchel 2010).

Conceptualizing music as an overtly politically charged conception and phenomena, Attali rather asserts that, music is the mirror of a society and premonitory of the changes that are to come in the society. He considers music as being inscribed between noise and silence, and that every code of music is rooted in the ideologies and technologies of its age, and it also produces them at the same time. He hypothesizes noise as murder and argues that music is “noise given form” according to a code and that music (prior to Capitalism) functions in the “crystallization of social organization in order” by channeling noise (violence) into music as a “scapegoat” for simulacrum of murder—affirming the possibility of society (Attali 2011).

Perhaps, music is what all these various scholars have mentioned and also much more than what studies on music are yet to conjecture. But what is certain is that the phenomenon of music is something that human beings engage in, or most of the people do, if not all. As Small in *'Musicking'* asserts, “music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do. That the fundamental nature and meaning of music lie not in objects, not in musical works at all, but in action—in what people do. So, it is only by understanding what people do as they take part in a musical act that we can hope to understand its nature and the function it fulfills in human life” (Small 1988, 8). Further, the presumed autonomous ‘thingness’ of works of music is just a reflection of the prevailing modern philosophy of art where the created art object itself is more valued rather than the action of art—the act of creating, and even less, that of perceiving and responding. As such, music is not so much about *music* as about people *musicking*—conceptualizing music as *musicking* or *to music*: “To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.”(Small 1988, 9).

Additionally, Small also posits that the verb *to music* is not concerned with valuation. It is descriptive, rather than being prescriptive and covers all participation in a musical performance: whether it takes place actively or passively; even if one like the way it happens or does not; whether one considers it as interesting or boring, constructive or destructive, sympathetic or antipathetic. That everyone, whether aware of it or not, has a certain notion of musicking, an idea of what musicking is, of what it is not, and of the part it plays in our lives and that everyone's musical experience is valid. A theory of musicking, as well as the act itself, is not just an affair for intellectuals and "cultured" people but is an important component of understanding oneself and of one's relationships with other people. Besides, the meaning of music is to be found not in just the organized sounds that are often considered as music but "in the relationships between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world and even perhaps the supernatural world" (Small 1988, 13).

## **(ii) Music and Tribe**

Richard Kent Wolf in *Three Perspectives on Music and the Idea of Tribe in India* presents three ethnomusicological approaches to study the idea of tribe and their music. First, the "popular representational" approach, where the tribe's representations in popular media and academic writing are studied. Second, "on the ground" approach, where the attempt is to study the idea of tribe by investigating concepts and categories used by a present-day mixture of peoples who live in multi-ethnic settings. Third, the "synthetic ethnomusicological" approach, in which tribal music is studied by discovering the extent to which the many the musical traditions in India known as 'tribal music,' share elements of style or structure and also assess the significance of their common elements.

By examining the representations of tribals in media and scholarship, he states that, in India, the 'tribe' exists as an idea—as an ideal type, independent of the people themselves. That, in spite of surface similarities among some of the most known tribal groups, Indian tribal people do not actually constitute a historically or culturally meaningful entity. So, he speculates that if identity of tribe in India is an external construction with no other ontological basis, how useful it is to study the music of an Indian

tribe *qua* its identity as a tribe. Therefore, he would rather suggest shifting the object of study from an “essentialist approach”—from what particular communities share because they are tribes to an “agentive approach”—“to what they actively emphasize as essential to their tribal identities” as one methodologically safe solution. He is also of the view that by using methods of ethnomusicology, one might perhaps analyze or interrogate the idea of tribe by examining how in a given political, economic, or other cultural arena, what musical choices tribal musicians make when representing themselves as ‘tribals’ in a general sense, rather than a particular ethnic group.

Wolf considers the second approach “on the ground” as another safe approach, as he believes that locating the study of tribe in a local ethnographic setting with clear geographical and social boundaries provides neat limits for generalization. In the context of Nilgiri hills in India he states:

Both tribal musical sound and tribal music making per se are traded as cultural capital in the Nilgiris; Niligiri tribal music can only exist as an entity because there is a holistic multi-cultural system that seems to be shared in many details only among the adivasis of the region. It does not matter how this entity is named as there is a clear historical and geographical basis for discussing the music of what we may call premodern inhabitants of the Niligiris...in a general sense, it does not matter whether the people are called “tribals” or by some other name (Woolf 2000/2001, 131).

The third approach, i.e. “the synthetic approach” he states, has the least empirical ground to stand on. In spite of the awareness of the “bureaucratic” *constructedness* of the notion of tribe, here he attempts to analyze Indian tribal music as “if it were an entity” and try to examine if ‘they’ share similar musical structures. From his examinations, he concludes that the provisional model of tribal musical organization, *as a whole*, distinct from mainstream Indian music—is perhaps not a mode of “tribal music” at all. So, he rather suggests examining ‘tribal music’ in a wider South Asian lens rather than a telescopic tribal one. Even though he considers this model as tentative, he is of the view that its strength lies in the ability to suggest relationships that extend beyond tribal music, and that considering the many cultural forms that are entangled with one another in different regions in the subcontinent, he sees the possibility of viewing South Asia as an “area” in some sense (Wolf 2000/2001).



In the context of the Nagas, with the awareness of the construct of the category of ‘tribe,’ Wolf’s first approach where the emphasis is laid on the “agentive approach”—to what the Nagas consider as essential to their identity, is a helpful model to study their music. His second approach can also be of aid considering the contiguous region that the Nagas occupy in the Indian State and Myanmar. This approach also helps in studying the musical practices of the Nagas based on their acceptance of a *cultural sharedness* and as a distinct ethnic community, not necessarily as tribals. But, his third “synthetic approach” is problematic in the context of the Nagas. The Nagas being ethnically and culturally very distinct from the larger notion of India in a general sense, it would be erroneous to place the study of Naga music within a pan-Indian tribal music. The attempt to find a pan-Indian tribal similarity is also implausible, considering the nascent constructedness of an Indian entity and the diversity not only in the country but even amongst the various communities that are classified as tribals—in terms of ethnicity, culture, religion, and history. Rather, we can perhaps take common experiences of particular themes or factors, such as Christianity or Colonialism in the Northeastern region of India, in the study of changes in musical style of ‘tribals.’

### **(iii) Musicking of the Nagas**

There are many ethnographic writings on the Nagas by colonial administrators, European anthropologists, and missionaries in the past—on their identity, political set up, customs and rituals, etc. Over the years, the Nagas themselves have also made many documentations about their culture, identity, and history—ever since they learned the art of writing. But very few writings are available on their traditional musical practices. On top of that, the fact that the Nagas are also a family of many tribes with shared cultural and political identity, yet every tribe being distinct, making a general statement of the musical practices of the Nagas as a whole, risk glossing over different musical styles among the many Nagas. However, in spite of the distinctness of each tribe, certain similarities can be found in the traditional musical practices of many Naga tribes.

Peseye in ‘*Developing an Indigenous Hymnody for the Naga Baptist Churches of Northeast India*’ mentions that, singing amongst the Nagas are most often in solo or group

singing in harmony without musical accompaniment. And there are also specific songs for specific occasions. He quotes A. Temjen Jamir's seven broad categories of song types found among the Nagas as such:

1. Warrior Song: songs composed and sung to honor the achievements of a victorious warrior. These are also songs of praise to the spirit for giving that victory.
  2. Love Song: usually sung by the young people. These songs are shared during almost any daily activities, such as while doing household chores, going to the field or tending to the cows.
  3. Mourning Song: songs composed on the death of a warrior, a rich man, or a village chief and elder.
  4. Feasts of Merit or Mithun Sacrifice Song: these songs honor the rich man who hosts a Feast of Merit or a series of these. Through these feasts, a Naga may earn recognition in the society.
  5. Song of Peace and Reconciliation: songs of friendships between neighboring villages. In the olden days of head-hunting practices with the constant threat of war, friendships forged between villages were highly valued. These friendships were celebrated each year with a number of related songs when villages would pay each other visits.
  6. Labor Song: songs associated with different kinds of work such as, working in the field, pounding rice, or carrying heavy loads. While some of these songs may have a text, most make use of vocable words like, "Oh-ho," "ha-hum," etc.
  7. Seasonal Song: Songs performed during the different appointed festivals.
- (Peseye 2003, 60)

Similar categorization of songs is also mentioned by Mashangthei Horam on the type of songs that are practiced amongst the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas. He categorized some of the major types of Hao-Tangkhul songs as such: Raila (war song), Meisumla (Songs that are sung in youth dormitories), Luishaola (Songs of paddy planting, seedlings and transplanting), Yarra la (spring songs), Naokhot la (lullaby), Yangyirla (autumn songs), Chapchatla (songs for the dead), Petla (evening songs), Maranla (house building songs), etc. He asserts that the Hao-Tangkhuls were music lovers and music practitioners to the extent that "singing came as naturally as breathing to the Tangkhuls." That they would sing in mirth and in sorrow, in the sunshine and in the rain, when alone or in groups (Horam 1997).

Tuisem Ngakang in his paper, *'Loss and Revitalization of Traditional Art: The State of Tangkhul Naga Music'* notes that in the traditional musical style, group singing amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls was performed in three voices or parts: Okrei (soprano), Okla (alto), Kharei (bass). And that the traditional Hao-Tangkhul songs are very strong in metaphor,

and symbolism is at the core of the oral verses. He further observed that, in the past, the transmission of folk/traditional music was frequently incidental rather than making a conscious decision to learn, or teach, as music was often acquired indirectly through the exposure to some other task, of which music was a part of. Besides, there were also no boundaries between musicians and listeners in the Hao-Tangkhuls' traditional musical practice, as "everyone is a participant." But he laments that this rich traditional musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls deteriorated with the advent of Colonialism and Christianity in the Hao-Tangkhul Naga Hills. The British colonial rule as Ngakang asserts, triggered the deculturalization and the decaying of the otherwise rich folk music tradition of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas. They introduced new avenues of occupation amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls—Pastors, School Teachers, and Assistants of colonial administration. But as the musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls were closely knitted with their everyday activities (such as agricultural work), with the changes in occupation, the introduction of new technologies, and new actualities, there was a transference in the function of music. Songs such as *Luishom laa* (rice planting song) got relegated to annual performance at festivals and for performances on visits of VIPs in the village. Further, the introduction of Western education by Baptist missionaries and the ban on many traditional practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls led to the decay and disappearance of *Longshim*, which was the traditional institution where young Hao-Tangkhul men and women were taught the art of music, dance, warfare, etc. Thus, leading to the gradual degradation of their traditional musical practices (Ngakang 2014).

Shimreiwung opines a similar argument on the collective nature of the musical practices amongst the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas, as Ngakang did. He considers the participation of every individual, in every act of popular performance, as the distinctive feature in the performance tradition of the Hao-Tangkhuls. However, unlike Ngakang, Shimreiwung opines a more optimistic view of the musical practices of their society. He is of the opinion that even in the contemporary time, the significance attached to the norms of participation has not completely gone out of sync even though punitive social sanctions are no longer imposed. That, even though most of the Hao-Tangkhuls have stopped performing *Work songs*, there are still few villages in the northern region of Hao-Tangkhul country where singing work songs while working in the field are still practiced.

On the contemporary musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas, Shimreiwung also notes that foreign musical instruments, such as guitar, piano, etc., which were not known in the past have now become an integral part of the musical performances of the Hao-Tangkhuls, and these musical instruments came along with the songs that were learned through listening to “music records of distant culture.” Interestingly, he also posits that even though Western music was introduced amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls in the religious domain, it was the availability of record players that exposed them to various genres of Western music, such as Gospel and Country songs. As missionaries and school teachers were already teaching the skill of singing in Western tune—in churches and schools—Western songs and foreign musical instruments like guitar were gradually adopted and became intrinsic in their contemporary cultural practice. He further asserts, the fact that the guitar has become the most common and popular musical instrument amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls indicates that music can not only be appreciated but also learned if it suits the aesthetic sense and taste of the receiving communities (Shimreiwung 2009).

Ngakang and Shimreiwung’s writings mark a new step in the study of Hao-Tangkhul Naga musical practices. Unlike the few early writings available which were primarily focused on traditional musical (mostly song compilation), they’ve made attempts to locate the study of Hao-Tangkhuls’ musicking in the context of Christianity and Colonialism. However, in both their studies, a more detailed study on the contemporary musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas is still lacking. Ngakang’s study confines mainly to their traditional musical practices and how these practices have been eroded under the weight of Colonialism and Christianity. Besides, his writings on Hao-Tangkhul music are still very few to give a thorough understanding of their musicking. Shimreiwung has made some significant documentation of the contemporary Hao-Tangkhul musical practices, but his study has so far been concerned with the overall cultural changes in their society, and hence lacks a thorough critical study, specifically on the musicking of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas.

So, to some extent, the attempt in this study has been to reflect on what they’ve written, and engage in a specific research on Hao-Tangkhul musical practices, over the years—taking into account the context of Christianity and Colonialism, as well as extending further into their contemporary music practices.

## Field Description: People and Locale

### (i) Etymology of ‘Hao’ and ‘Tangkhul’

The name Tangkhul is of recent use in the twentieth century. As Vashum pointed out, the origin of the word ‘Tangkhul’ is still unclear. Some are of the view that it means the descendants of ‘Tangku,’ “an outstanding person with many qualities,” who lived in the past. While some make the proposition that the term is derived from ‘Thankhul,’ a combination of two words: Myanmar term ‘Athangphi’ or ‘Thanpi’ (meaning iron men) and Meitei term, ‘Than-khul,’ meaning ‘Than-village’ (Vashum 2014). Amongst the Meitei, there are some who suggest that it is probably a derivation from ‘Atongba-khun,’ meaning village in the hills and some even suggest that it has to do with the myth that Hao-Tangkhuls were the elder brothers of the Meiteis, and so a reference to Hao-Tangkhuls’ village as ‘Tadagi-khun,’ elder brother’s village. But amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, some of them are of the view that, they were known as ‘Wung’/‘Hung,’ tracing its justification from the usage of the term in their traditional songs (Shimray 2000). While many are also of the view that the name ‘Hao’/ ‘Hau’ is their real identity. This reasoning is derived from the term that they identify with the lifeworld of their ancestors, prior to their encounters with Colonialism and Christianity—*Hao-laa*, *Hao-pheichak*, *Hao-ngashan*, *Hao-kuiret*, *Hao-shim*, etc.<sup>4</sup> But with the conversion of Hao-Tangkhuls to Christianity, over the years, the term usually went out of use.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, lately, now the term ‘Hao’ is getting popularized as their identity, especially amongst the youth.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Hao-laa*, *Hao-pheichak*, *Hao-ngashan*, *Hao-kuiret*, and *Hao-shim*, can be roughly translated as Hao-song, Hao-dance Hao-culture/tradition, Hao-haircut and Hao-house, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Along with the reason cited above, it is also possible that the term went out of fashion because of the historically degrading connotation with which their neighbouring community, the Meiteis, use it as a reference to all the communities in the hills, in general.

<sup>6</sup> Considering all the aforementioned discourse in mind, the researcher has used the term Hao-Tangkhuls in an attempt to revive the name ‘Hao’ which many of the Hao-Tangkhuls considers as the original name of their community. The attempt is also to counter and reclaim the term from the degrading connotation with which it has been historically used, as a reference to the communities in the hills of Manipur state.

## **(ii) Origin and Migration**

In the absence of written records in the past, the origin of the Hao-Tangkhuls is still in obscurity, like the rest of the Nagas. According to some of the prevalent oral narratives, there are beliefs amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls that, along with the rest of other Nagas, they dispersed from Makhel/Maikhel, a village situated in Mao-Maram hills, in the present Manipur state. That, after residing in Makhel for many years, they found the place too small to accommodate all of them, and so, some of them departed to find new settlements (Horam 1977). The Makhel theory is also mentioned in accounts of T.C. Hodson, one of the early Western anthropologists who wrote on the Nagas. Besides the aforementioned narrative, Hodson suggests two more traditions of their origin: in the first, they were settled in the valley but later on migrated to the hills on account of heat and mosquitoes. The other one is in the later period when an increase in their strength led to migration from some of the old villages (Hodson 1911).

Another theory which is popular amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls is that they have migrated to their present habitat from Samsok (Thaungdut in Myanmarese), an adjacent area of the Hao-Tangkhul homeland. This assertion is based on some of the traditional songs that they still retain. But as Shimray observed, Samsok is unlikely to be the origin of the Hao-Tangkhuls; perhaps, one of the places where they settled before migrating to their present habitat. Yet, since there is no specific indication in the present oral narratives that are retained, it is likely that their migration to the present habitat was in the remote past. He further suggests that the Hao-Tangkhuls, not as they are known now, were likely a part of other larger group that lived in and around the valleys of Hwang-Ho and Yangtse Kiang river, around 2000 BC; but left the area, fearing the suppression of the then Chinese Emperors. After departing from China, over the years, they reached Chindwin river valley (Thaungdut area), then entered Imphal valley, and later on moved uphill again in their present habitat (Shimray 2000).

However, as Vashum argued, the origin of the Hao-Tangkhuls cannot be traced in isolation, as their historical origin is tied with other Nagas (Vashum 2014). In this effort, R.R. Shimray posits an intriguing account. He posits that the Nagas might have come from a coastal region or crossed some islands or the seas in the journey to their present habitat. This reasoning he derives on the basis of their lifestyles, particularly the generous

incorporation of Cowrie shells and Conch shells in adorning their dresses, and as precious ornaments. Further, he argues that the Nagas have many customs and lifestyle similar to many peoples living nearby the sea—Malaysia, Thailand, Borneo, etc.—especially the Dyaks and Kayans of Borneo, Battaks of Sumatra, the Igorots of Philippines, Kal-Mon-Annam of Indonesia and certain groups of Formosa (Shimray 1985). Khongreiwo, another Hao-Tangkhul scholar, states that the major unresolved problems concerning the migration and early settlements of the Nagas is the issue of dating. He mentions that pre-historical archaeological evidence in the Naga areas in the present state of Manipur and Nagaland, such as hand axes, choppers, blades, bone tools, etc., has traced the antiquity of humans in these areas to circa eighth millennium B.C., or 10000 B.P. But the issue of the identifying these pre-historic settlers are still not clear. So, the complex issue of dating their origin and migration is still an ongoing discourse (Khongreiwo 2010).

But, in spite of this uncertainty, in the narrative of the Nagas, as well as its neighboring communities, the literature on other communities settled in their present habitat is unheard of. As Vashum suggest, even though the Nagas do not have a written history, they have unwritten sources of history, which he advocates as “proto-history” or “ethnohistory.” Based on these closely held narratives, certain facts on Hao-Tangkhul history that emerged are:

1. A tradition of emerging from the bowels of the earth/holes or/and caves.
2. The Hao-Tangkhuls point to the East (East Asia or South East Asia) as the place of origin.
3. The Hao-Tangkhuls have a tradition of reckoning Samsok (Thaungdut in Myanmarese) as their place of origin.
4. There are evidence that Hao-Tangkhuls once settled in Manipur valley at one point in time.
5. *Makhel* (situated in Mao Naga area) is one of the significant historical locations of the settlement of the bulk of Hao-Tangkhuls.
6. A section of Hao-Tangkhuls identify Shokvao (also the name of a Hao-Tangkhul village) as a place they passed during migration.
7. There is a tradition which considers the Hao-Tangkhuls and Meities (the neighbouring community settled in Manipur valley) as descendants of elder brother and younger brother respectively.

(Vashum 2014, 41)

### (iii) The Present

The Hao-Tangkhuls are one of the largest Naga tribes with a population of 1, 83,115 (according to 2011 census) in India, but it is likely to be over two lakhs if Somra Tangkhuls in Myanmar are taken into account. Their ancestral domain is situated in the contiguous frontier areas of North-East India and North-West Myanmar. In India, they are mostly confined in Ukhrul district<sup>7</sup> of present Manipur State. Contiguous Hao-Tangkhul villages are also located in the South Eastern flank of Senapati district, and Thoubal district which is South West of Ukhrul district. Hao-Tangkhul Nagas, also known as Somra Tangkhuls in Myanmar, are situated in Leishi Township and Homalin Township in the Sagaing region of Myanmar too. Ukhrul district, the main concentrated homeland of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas lies between the latitude 24° N – 25.410°N and longitude 94°E – 94.470°E. It is a hilly district with an area of 4544 sq.km comprising of over 200 villages. As Vashum asserts, the Hao-Tangkhul Naga region is a landlocked mountainous region with cold climate almost throughout the year. The hill ranges varies from 913 meters above sea level to 3114 m (MSL) and is a part of the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspot (Vashum 2014).

Within the Hao-Tangkhuls, now, they demarcate their region into four zones: *Zingsho* (East), *Zingtun* (West), *Ato* (North), *Aze* (South). Each region has their own *Long* (Organization) that looks after the welfare of the region—‘Tangkhul Naga Zingsho Longphang,’ ‘Tangkhul Naga Zingtun Longphang,’ ‘Tangkhul Naga Ato Longphang,’ ‘Tangkhul Naga Aze Longphang’—all under the umbrella of ‘Tangkhul Naga Long,’ the highest apex body of the Hao-Tangkhuls. Within a village, *Awunga* (Chief) along with a clan based village council, *Hangva*, takes all the major decisions concerning a village. Besides that, the Church administration also increasingly plays an influential role in the actualities of a village.

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<sup>7</sup> In 2016, the state government of Manipur bifurcated Ukhrul into two districts (Ukhrul and Kamjong), along with several other districts in Manipur. But this has been a bone of contention with the Nagas and the State, as a major portion of their land are bifurcated into many districts, leaving them a minority in some of these new districts. Moreover, the Nagas see this creation of new districts as an attempt to barter away their ancestral lands. So, even though the state has declared new districts by bifurcating the older ones, Naga organizations refuse to acknowledge it, and they still contend for a negotiation on this matter.



Linguistically, Hao-Tangkhuls are classified under the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan Language family. Each village has their own distinct language which is intelligible only amongst the neighboring villages. But with the advent of Christianity amongst them, in the late nineteenth century, and the subsequent adoption of a common Bible and Hymnal, over the years, now they speak the language of Hunphun village, as a common lingua franca. But amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls in Myanmar, this language is not yet adopted by all.

In terms of occupation, the Hao-Tangkhuls were primarily an agricultural society, and to a large extent, they still are. But, a large section of their people are also now no longer dependent on agriculture as their primary means of livelihood. Many of them are now working as Manipur state and Indian Central government employees, as well as in many fields in the private sector. An increasing number of Hao-Tangkhuls are also now working in metropolitan cities of India, as well as abroad. In addition, many of their youths are migrating to cities like Delhi, Bangalore, and Mumbai—in pursuit of higher education, as well as job opportunities. As a result, a sizeable number of Hao-Tangkhuls are settled in these places. These actualities, in turn, are also impacting the economy at home; the forms of sociality and socialization amongst them and with other communities; the mobility of their youth, and so on.

All these actualities of their present state can be historically traced to the changes that began in their encounter with Christianity and Colonialism. As mentioned earlier in the beginning of this chapter, Colonialism and Christianity had brought about major shifts in their lifeworld. Their change of faith altered many of their worldview and approach to life. Along with that, injecting the narratives of their sovereign republic villages into a nation-state system, opened up their land—and concomitantly their lives—to the trappings of global forces. The processes of change that ensued not only impacted their lives at those encounters but the changes in their social realities then, directed the path, if not enabled, the conditions and actualities of their lives, in the present.

## Research Problem & Objectives

*“There is no harm in embracing the good things of other cultures that have universal values, but by all means let us keep the best in our own.”*<sup>8</sup>

Vashum in his editorial preface, *‘Terrains of Tangkhul Society: An Overview,’* notes that the encounters of the indigenous peoples with modernity has its unique contours and characteristics. Each ethnic group or/and nation has its own narratives and experiences which are yet to be told to the world by and large, yet, a commonality that can be found in their narratives is that they are marginalized and often subjugated peoples placed in various modern states. In the process of colonialism and post-colonialism (post-colonization), with much of their unique cultures and identities being uprooted, now many of these indigenous peoples are struggling to either restore their lost cultures and identities, or resisting the hegemonic forces of the state and ‘outsiders’ (dominant communities and ruling classes). The Hao-Tangkhul Nagas are one of such marginalized indigenous communities (Vashum 2014).

The core objective of this research has been a trajectory of such initiatives by people of marginalized communities to retrace, explore, and communicate the narratives of their communities over time—the musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas in this case. As mentioned earlier, the narratives on the musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls are still very few. The few writings that are available—primarily about their traditional music, are mostly not more than a section in a dissertation, or a book, articles in a few journals or newspapers, or a compilation of songs. A dedicated study of their music is scarce. When it comes to their contemporary music, it is even less. Apart from the few writings that have been discussed in the literature review, the attempts by the researcher have so far not yielded much literature, and this has been corroborated by the few scholars whose work that have been mentioned earlier. So, there is a huge lack of literature on the given research area. As such, the interest of this research is to generate literature on Hao-Tangkhul musical practices and also to assess how musicking of a particular society changes over time: what

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<sup>8</sup> Words of J. H. Kwabena Nketia, as cited by Krabill, in “Encounters: What Happens to Music when People Meet,” from the book, *Music in the Life of the African Church*. Baylor University Press, 2008.

factors are influential in its musical practices—the intersections of music with the conditions of a society and the global cultural flows of the world.

In this attempt, this dissertation has tried to narrate the trajectory of the musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls: first, by interrogating their historical past; what was their traditional music and how was it practiced; the intervention of Colonial power and processes of Christianization, and the shifts in their community entailed by such interventions—on their polity, economy, social, cultural and religious practices—and its consequent impact on their musical practice, in the past, as well as in the present. Secondly, it examines and interrogates the intersections of Hao-Tangkhul musicking with global cultural flows. No doubt it was in the religious domain that Hao-Tangkhuls were introduced to Western music, but it would be naïve to confer the predominance of modern musical styles, such as Western pop and rock in the musicking of the Hao-Tangkhul youth, solely to the influences of Western music implanted and nurtured by Christianity. It is necessary to take into account the influences of global cultural flows and the impact of its mediations in the everyday lives of Hao-Tangkhuls. As Shimreiwung pointed out, the availability of record players led to the exposure of Hao-Tangkhuls to various genres of Western music, beginning with the old gospel songs of Jim Reeves and moved on to the old country songs of Dolly Parton, Don Williams, John Denver, etc. That, in the contemporary music practice of Hao-Tangkhuls, the popularity and use of the guitar is to such an extent that even while singing popular Bollywood songs and Manipuri songs, Hao-Tangkhuls employ the guitar as a primary sound supplement to these songs, even though the guitar was not employed in the original musical record (Shimreiwung 2009).

Will Straw in *Music and Material Culture* asserts that music is arguably one of the most embedded in the material infrastructures of our daily lives and that the “uses” of music in everyday life are increasingly about the ongoing “repurposing” of music and its integration within ever more varied activities and situations (Straw 2012). So, in order to understand the different aspects of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas musicking, this study attempts to detail the context under which their musical practices were made possible, and how with their changing actualities their musicking has also transformed.

I am hopeful that this research will contribute in exploring and interpreting the shifting cultural narratives of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas. Taking further what Jacques Attali

propounded, that “music is more than an object of study: it is a way of perceiving the world” (Attali 2011, 4), this study will try to explore if music is also a way of reconstituting one’s social world.

## **Methodology and Theoretical Influences**

Ever since the conception of this research, a major dilemma for this project has been the scarcity of literature on the research topic. As mentioned earlier, aside from few articles available as a part of a book, in a newspaper or a section in a dissertation, there was very little literature available on Hao-Tangkhul music—whether on their traditional music or other musical styles that they have adopted over the years. The few writings on their traditional music are generally a compilation of few songs or a few references in the larger section of a book, but no detailed work has so far been undertaken on the Hao-Tangkhul traditional musical practices. Even when it comes to their contemporary musical practices, apart from what Shimreiwung (2009) referred to in his doctoral dissertation and a chapter by Ngakang (2014), as a part of a book on the Hao-Tangkhuls, there is no other literature that the researcher is aware of—even after my fieldwork, where I was hoping that more literature would surface. Concomitantly, in gathering information and structuring a narrative on the traditional musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls, along with the few written literatures that are available, I have relied heavily on the oral tradition of the Hao-Tangkhuls—which are primarily the oral narratives of elderly Hao-Tangkhuls. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to engage in lengthy discussions with few elderly Hao-Tangkhuls who had seen or rather lived the lifeworlds of the Hao-Tangkhuls—of the pre-Christian lifeworld, when traditional musical practice was vibrantly lived; as well as the transition from such context to the present, where traditional music is now a small aspect of the musicking of the Hao-Tangkhuls.

When it comes to contemporary music practices, I have again relied mostly on my field notes, the narratives of individuals that were garnered through personal interviews and group discussions, as well as drawing even on my own experiences in the community. Here, being born in the same community that I am researching on, it is necessary to highlight my position as a researcher. Can I claim to be an ‘insider’ by virtue of being born

into a Hao-Tangkhul family? Will my positioning as an ‘insider’ purport to claim a more authentic study?

The debate on being a ‘native’ or an ‘endogenous’ ethnographer has been there for some time and still likely to continue, in the days ahead (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984, Ginkel 1994, Narayan 1993, etc.). Yes, I was born in a Hao-Tangkhul family but as Narayan (1993) asserted, a person may have many strands of identification available, strands that may be tugged into the open or stuffed out of sight. In my community, I would be considered a *Raphei*<sup>9</sup> Hao-Tangkhul, and as a male in a patriarchal society, to a certain degree, I would have preferential advantages or mobility, over a female in my community.<sup>10</sup> But at the same time, unlike the majority of the Hao-Tangkhuls, I was born and raised in Imphal valley, where the neighborhood (mainly working class) comprises of families from various ethnicity.<sup>11</sup> And now for over a decade, the major part of my youth life has been confined to Delhi. As a result, my stay in the ancestral domain of the Hao-Tangkhuls have largely been restricted to (long as well as short) visits during festivals, family gatherings and winter-summer breaks from school and college. However, being raised in a neighborhood of mixed ethnicity and culture, and now the extended stay in a city like Delhi, perhaps I might have the advantage of noticing the peculiarities of my community over another Hao-Tangkhul who is raised or are still confined in a Hao-Tangkhul village. Being raised in a place which is not the ancestral domain of the Hao-Tangkhuls, and living in a city like Delhi, perhaps, it may have been easier to “bracket” away my own lived history as a Hao-Tangkhul (Schutz 1967).

Still, neither can I negate the advantageous position in understanding the “emotive-psychological dimensions of behaviour” as Ohnuki-Tierney (1984) argued, nor the

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<sup>9</sup> Raphei is the name associated with the northern Hao-Tangkhuls. In colonial writings, they are generally referred to as Luhupas.

<sup>10</sup> Even though the status of male and female are much more egalitarian in the present context, amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, there are many patriarchal structures and conceptions that are still prevalent. For example, even today, ancestral lands are only handed down to the sons in the family. If there is no son in a family, then the ancestral land will be passed on to the males in the immediate family—the male siblings of the father who has a son or sons. Even in their religious practice, except for a few cases, the majority of the church administration are handled mainly by men.

<sup>11</sup> A) In Imphal valley, the dominant community are the Meiteis. Besides the Meiteis, many ethnic groups such as Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribes, various Naga tribes, Meitei Muslims, as well as Punjabis, Nepalis, Marwaris etc. are now settled in the capital (Imphal) of Manipur.

B) Beyond the ancestral lands of the Hao-Tangkhuls, probably the largest concentration of Hao-Tangkhuls (comprising mainly families of government employees and businessman) will be in Imphal.

advantage of sharing a language, the cultural nuances that accrue with sharing a culture and so on. But these intimacies also raises the difficulty of not overlooking matters which familiarity could engender as self-evident—taking for granted which someone from the ‘outside’ could construe as a peculiar characteristic or phenomenon (Ginkel 1994). So, being aware of the advantages and disadvantageous of my particular position, but at the same time acknowledging the Hao-Tangkhuls as subjects with voices, views, and dilemmas—people to whom I am bonded not just through kinship but also through ties of reciprocity as a researcher-subject relationship, and who may even be critical of my academic enterprise (Narayan 1993)—the attempt has been to thickly describe and interpret the musicking of the Hao-Tangkhuls. In this effort, relying on oral narratives, the literatures that are available, and the strength of ethnographic inquiry—with a strand of phenomenological approach, I have tried to provide a *thick description* as outlined by Clifford Geertz (in his seminal work ‘Thick description: Toward an interpretative theory of culture’), in comprehending and interpreting the musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls: the traditional musical practices that was in the past; the music practices that transformed over the years; and the present negotiations of their contemporary music practices. The endeavor has been to describe their musical practices in the socio-cultural contexts and processes of their lived actualities, over the years—to provide enough context so that a person outside the culture can make meaning of their collective musical practices (Ray 2011). To make meaning of, and interpret the collective experiences of the community through the lived experiences of Hao-Tangkhul individuals, by describing the context and situations in which their lived experiences ensued. As Geertz pointed out, ethnographic description is interpretative of the flow of social discourse; and the interpretation involved consist in trying to rescue the “said” of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms. That the cogency of ethnographic explications are not to be measured against a body of uninterpreted data, radically thinned descriptions, “but against the power of the scientific imagination to bring us in touch with the lives of strangers” (Geertz 1973).

But to write about music is in itself a complex phenomenon, especially given the ephemerality of music. What and how does one contain the term to be able to write about it? As outlined earlier in the literature review, there are several ways of conceptualizing

and approaching a study of music. One method per se cannot claim to be able to capture the complex phenomenon that music is. Perhaps, it is only possible to write about certain aspects of music but never the whole aspect of it. So, this research is not an undertaking of all the complex dimensions of music, but it is located in the idea of *musicking* as outlined by musicologist Christopher Small—as an activity, something that people do and taking into account the composing, practicing and rehearsing, performing and listening as not separate processes, but as all aspects of musicking. To music or musicking as Small propounds, “is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing” (Small 1988, 9). So, the attempt in this research has dwelled largely on the act—how they practice music and in what context.

In this effort to present their musicking in the actualities of their lives, to a certain degree, I have also adopted the approaches of Lomax to study music as *musical styles*, which embraces the total human situation that produces the music: the transmission of music, the social function of music and the occasion of its production, the number of people habitually involved in a musical act, and the way in which they cooperate—the human habits that culture aims for and as such represents the “intention” of a culture (Lomax 2003). Further, Bourdieu’s conception of *habitus* and *cultural capital* has informed my attempts to understand the transition of the modes and styles of music practice amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, in their encounters with Christianity and Colonialism. With the aid of these perspectives, attempts have been made to reflect on how the changing conditionings of their society had also led to a shift in the adoption of Western hymns over their traditional music. And how this conditionings further shaped the musical practices of the younger generations—particularly, the repurposing of music in their changing context.

Finally, many aspects of this dissertation have also been informed by the notions of self-imaginings that modernity has entailed—as drawn attention to by Arjun Appadurai. In particular, the concepts of *scapes* and its impact on the reflexive (re) constitution of self. Appadurai’s *scapes* provides an insightful framework to explore the complexity and varying dynamics of the intersections of Hao-Tangkhuls social world with global forces. As he posits, the “new global cultural economy” has to be understood as a “complex,

disjunctive order between economy, culture and politics” (Appadurai 1997, 32) and these spaces—ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes “are the building blocks of...*imagined worlds*” (Appadurai, 1997, 33)—“imagined life possibilities” (Appadurai 1997, 55).

As music is a phenomenon that mediates in everyday life of many people, Hao-Tangkhuls being no exception, it becomes pertinent to explore the place of musicking in the (re)constitution of self or self-imaginings (that is afforded by musicking), and its complex intersections and influences in the (re)constitution of collective identities.

## **Chapterisation**

### ***Chapter 1: Introduction***

In this chapter, as detailed above, an outline of what this research entails has been mentioned: the area of study; literature review; field description; research problems and objectives; as well as the methodology and theoretical influences.

### ***Chapter 2: The Traditional Musical Practices of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas***

As indicated by the title, the traditional musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls is the primary intent of this chapter. An attempt has been made to contextualize the conception of ‘traditional’ music as it is used in this study. The attempt in this chapter has been not just to detail the styles of their musical practices but to contextualize it in the actualities of their lives—to understand the significance of their music practice in their way of life.

### ***Chapter 3: Colonialism, Christianity, and Changes in Music***

This chapter narrates the historical account of the advent of Colonial powers and Christianity in the Hao-Tangkhul hills, and its ensuing impact on their society—on their polity, economic, social, cultural and religious practices, as well as institutions. The approaches and actions of the Colonial rulers and Western Christian missionaries on the Hao-Tangkhuls have been interrogated in relation to the impact that it had on Hao-Tangkhuls musical practice. Besides contextualizing the changes in their musical practice in this historical period, this chapter also lays the background context to the proceeding chapters.



***Chapter 4: Hindi Film Songs, Church, and the Guitar***

This chapter begins with the musicking of Hao-Tangkhuls in the new context of the Nagas being included in the Indian nation-state, as the British Colonials and Western missionaries left. The first section as titled above is about the spread of Hindi film songs amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls in these changed circumstances. The second part primarily dwells on the musicking of the Hao-Tangkhuls, in the context of their religious practice. But, the narrative has also tried to explore how musicking in their religious practices spills over into other domains of their life. In the last segment, the narrative engages with the phenomenon of the guitar in the socio-music culture of the Hao-Tangkhuls—exploring the intersections of their social practices, musicking, and the global flows of cultures and technologies.

***Chapter 5: Conclusion***

This concluding chapter takes the help of theories to contextualize and comprehend the changes in Hao-Tangkhul musicking. In this effort, it extends further the theme of global cultural flows, mediations and human migration, which began in the preceding chapter—emphasizing the repurposing of music in their everyday lives, over the years—the continuities, as well as the transformation of their musical narratives.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Traditional Musical Practices of Hao-Tangkhul Nagas

I once came across a writing that asked, “What happens when you play a country song backward?” And the answer: “You get your house back, you get your pick up back, and you get your wife back...” The reason being—“country musicians write songs about their losses” (Zachariah 2009). If one were to similarly make one’s way back to the songs of the Hao-Tangkhuls’ ancestors, perhaps we will get back their rituals, festivals, heroes, and their way of life. As Merriam reckon, “All people, in no matter what culture, must be able to place their music firmly in the context of the totality of their beliefs, experiences, and activities, for without such ties, music cannot exist” (Merriam 1967, 3).

With these conceptions in mind, the primary intent of this chapter is to detail the Hao-Tangkhul traditional way of musicking: their musical style, the significance of music in their society, and the intersections of their musical practices with various aspects of their lives. But before proceeding to do so, it is necessary to ascertain what Hao-Tangkhul traditional music is—delimiting or rather, contextualizing the conception of their traditional musicking.

Writing on the conception of tradition, Kubik points out, “That which is handed down from one generation to the next may be called a “tradition.” A new type of music invented by someone now cannot be a tradition yet. But it may become one as time passes” (Kubik 1986, 53, as quoted in Gillespie 2010). Similarly, Graburn also noted that traditions are continually being created, not in some past time immemorial, but during modernity. That even new historically created phenomena are often quickly assumed to be age-old or timeless—a tradition—because people want them to be so (Graburn 2001). Likewise, Rouger and Duterte remarks that it is modern times that has invented the very concept of tradition or traditional music. They further outlined that the term *tradition/traditional* has evolved over the years and has been successively given many names—from country to popular, from popular to folk, then from folk to traditional. Each of these terms following the dictates of the specific concerns of the period that uses them (Rouger and Duterte 1999).

Seen in such light, the dichotomous distinction between what is ‘traditional’ music and what is not, is quite superficial unless it is grounded and conceptualized in the specific

context of a particular musical style or the musicking culture of a particular community. Further, the notion of stasis and permanence in tradition is problematic, as change occurs within the realm of the ‘traditional’ as well as the modern. Tradition grows through activity and maintenance—it fills up with the creation and practice of traditions—it is never static (Graburn 2001). As Gillespie posits, tradition is dynamic, just as is culture and the people who form and transform it (Gillespie 2010).

In the context of the Hao-Tangkhuls, we can conceptualize what constitutes their traditional music, by referring to certain historical period in their community and to the conceptions of what is considered as being the practices of their ancestors—by the Hao-Tangkhuls themselves. In this attempt, I shall be borrowing the approach that Gillespie adopted in discussing Duna’s music, in *‘Steep Slopes.’* Here, Gillespie uses the term *ancestral* and *introduced* rather than ‘tradition’ and ‘modern’—with reference to the period in Papua New Guinea, when the Duna people haven’t met the Whites yet, and post their encounter with them, respectively. She derives these terms based on the translations of Duna peoples’ reference to their ancestors as *awenene*—“of the grandmother kind” and *Khao*, meaning “the White people” (Gillespie 2010). In a similar fashion, it is helpful to make a conception of what constitutes Hao-Tangkhul traditional music by making historical references to Hao-Tangkhuls’ pre-contact and post-contact with Colonialism and Christianity (particularly).

Amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, everything associated with their ancestors is referred to—with the term *Hao*, as a prefix: *Hao-ngashan* (Hao custom/tradition), *Hao-shim* (Hao house), *Hao-phanit* (Hao festival), etc. Often, the term *Hao* has also been associated with the past life of Hao-Tangkhuls as non-Christians. This connotation can be traced to the days when the early Christian converts amongst them let go of the term *Hao*, and instead called themselves as *Vareshi* (God’s people)—making a distinction between them and their brethren who still continued living their old way of life. With time, the usage of the term *Hao* became synonymous with being non-Christian and the past.<sup>12</sup> As Rev. Somi<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Often, one hears aged Hao-Tangkhul men and women speak of “*Hao salakha wui atam*”—a reminiscence of the days when they were non-Christians.

<sup>13</sup> Rev. Somi Kasomwoshi is a native of Hunphun village and presently the pastor of Ukhrul Town Baptist Church.

lamented, “the present generation of Hao-Tangkhuls unfortunately still misconstrues Hao as non-Christians rather than realizing that Hao is the authentic name of their community, rather than the term ‘Tangkhul’ which is of foreign origin.”

With this context, traditional music in the context of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas can be construed as a reference to the ways and style of music that was practiced in their society, before their encounter with Christianity (which came along with Colonialism). However, this does not imply that this musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls, from here on referred to as traditional music, was static in the past, nor did it ceased—post their contact with Christian missionaries and Colonial rule—but the musical practices then, has transformed to the extent that in the present context, its meanings and functions in their society, has altered significantly.

### **Traditional Musical Style**

Alan Lomax, a renowned musicologist and proponent of folk music, opines in several of his writings that the new science of music (al) ethnography should move beyond the study of music in European music, as it fails to address the varied musical interests of mankind, especially the description of folk and ‘primitive’ music. So, he would rather assert a method based on the study of the *musical styles* or musical habits of mankind. A *style* he states is the result of a certain group of practices which is the qualitative end product of a certain set of actions. A musical style is learned as a whole and responded to as a whole, by a member of any culture. He further asserts that style is the goal that culture aims for, and as such it represents the “intention” of a culture. As such, the study of musical style should embrace the total human situation which produces the music:

1. The number of people habitually involved in a musical act, and the way in which they cooperate.
2. The relation between the music makers and the audience.
3. The physical behaviour of the music makers—their bodily stance, gestures, facial expressions, muscular tensions, especially those of the throat.
4. The vocal timbres and pitch favoured by the culture, and their relationship to the physical behaviour of the music makers
5. The social function of the music and the occasion of its production.
6. Its psychological and emotional content as expressed in the song texts and the culture’s interpretation of this traditional poetry.
7. How songs are learned and transmitted.

8. Finally, the formal elements in the situation: the scales, the interval systems, the rhythmic patterns, the melodic contours, the techniques of harmony used; the metric patterns of the verse, the structure of the poetry, and the complex interplay between poetic and musical patterns, the instruments and instrumental techniques. (Lomax 2003, 142).

Though not necessarily subscribing to his notion of “folk or primitive music,” drawing on the strength of his approaches, we shall try to look at some aspects of Hao-Tangkhul traditional musical practices.

### (i) Hao Laa as Historical Archive

The Hao-Tangkhuls do not have a word for ‘music.’ The terminology they use for their traditional music is *Hao Laa/Lā*<sup>14</sup>—which can be literally translated as Hao song. This conception of *song* as *music* points to the significance of *words* in their lives, and consequently on their musicking too. As the popular saying amongst them goes, “*Laa hi channa, chan hi laana*” (songs they are words, words they are songs). Words, in the form of songs and tales, were the Hao-Tangkhuls primary means of recording their actualities, history and passing on the narratives of their community. No doubt embellishment to a story or song were sometimes added or aberrations of memory sometimes alter a narrative, yet the core was untouched (Horam 1977). These were the repositories of the narratives of their people. Besides their tales, songs became the primary means of preserving their culture, tradition and history (Shongzan 2013). Accordingly, for every occasion or event, they composed a number of songs and bequeath them as inheritance to the younger generation. The historicity of this practice is such that, till date, one the most conclusive account of the patterns of migration or place of settlements of the Hao-Tangkhuls can be traced in their traditional songs. An excerpt from Hao-Tangkhul *Miwurlung laa* (Song of Origin and Migration), which is still sung in recent times:

*O, kachili tunglo, avā Samsokli tunga,  
O, Ngakungana, O, ili phunga,  
O, Makangnao, O, ili pangthang,*

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<sup>14</sup> Along with the 26 English alphabets, ‘a’ with upper dash, ‘ā,’ as well as ‘a’ underlined, ‘a,’ are used in writing in Hao-Tangkhul Language. ‘ā,’ denotes an extended ‘a,’—‘aa’, while ‘a,’ is pronounced closer to the sound of ‘u.’

*O, Lungshang makān āna sāfa singsing,  
 O, malā, Unphun āvāva kharar, O, ya, ngachāng chihuili,  
 O, rom ungaphei,  
 O, Shokvaoli unghoyāma,  
 O, Māvalungli  
 O, mei ungayar.*

O, whence cometh thou originally, Father, we originated from Samsok (in Myanmar)  
 O, Ngakung carried me,  
 O, when Makāng parted me,  
 O, crossed Lungshāng with haunt dog,  
 O, was given only bow and arrow,  
 O, Ungphun<sup>15</sup> senior father, O yeah, what a thrill,  
 O, unloaded baggage,  
 O, yelled at Shokvao,  
 O, in Māvalung,  
 O, distribute fire.<sup>16</sup>

Another song sung amongst them narrates the Hao-Tangkhuls' journey from deep holes and rocks, amidst high mountains—urging that if one doubts, one can ask the stars who were witness to their journey. That the mountains traversed through, were rocky mountains, and of such height that as one looks at it from the foothill, it touches the stars in heaven<sup>17</sup> (Luikham 1961). The song goes as such:

*O katātā kashangshnag,  
 Na kachi eina shokli,  
 O marilungvali shok,  
 O chili mashokakha,  
 O kazing sirali kānganālo,  
 Laga unhangserlo.<sup>18</sup>*

(Free English translation)

O traverse up traverse down

<sup>15</sup> Unphun is a poetical usage for Hunphun village. This village is one of the biggest Hao-Tangkhul village, and geographically it lies somewhere in the middle of the Hao-Tangkhul country. The present Ukhrul town which is the head-quarter of the Hao-Tangkhuls, is located in the ancestral land of this village.

<sup>16</sup> The Hao-Tangkhul version of this song (in varying length and structure) is available in many of the writings of Hao-Tangkhuls. The English version of this song is referenced from R. Vashum's "Situating the Ethno history of the Tangkhul Nagas", in *Encountering Modernity*, Chicken Neck Publication, New Delhi, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Luikham, a noted Hao-Tangkhul personality, noted that this song is an indication of the Hao-Tangkhuls' migration to their present habitat, by traversing through deep gorges and rocks of Himalayan Mountains (in *Wung (Tangkhul) Naga Okthot Mayonza.*, 1962).

<sup>18</sup> The Hao-Tangkhul version of this song is referenced from T.Luikham's *Wung (Tangkhul) Naga Okthot Mayonza*, 1961.

Whence though cometh?  
 O from deep caves we came  
 O if not cometh from there,  
 O listen to the stars in Heaven,  
 And come, thou proclaim to all.

The repository of their narratives in the form of songs was not confined to the actualities within their own community, but it extends even to the relationships of the Hao-Tangkhuls with their neighboring communities too. Hao-Tangkhuls still retains a *Kharar laa* which points to the historical period when many Meiteis<sup>19</sup> took refuge amongst the communities in the hills, after the invasion of Meitei kingdom by Avāh (Burma) in 1819. This period is a significant historical event in the history of the Meiteis and it is better known as ‘Chahi Taret Khuntakpa’ (Seven years Devastation 1819-1925) (Shimreingam 2015). In this song, the narrative is that of a love stricken Meitei woman who was about to depart from her lover (a Hao-Tangkhul man) and the abode of the Hao-Tangkhuls.

*O! Meiteiāva sitmahui,  
 Wungram Kashangla leishiya,  
 Āli reklai ungsifaya,  
 Nashimphungli marānthei sui,  
 Suikhareireilo ini kuini ini khuināsa,  
 Thishunglo O nathanvalā thishunglo!*

Meitei girl is sad,  
 How lovely is the rich Wungram;<sup>20</sup>  
 How sad to remember the land.  
 The cooking of soya bean in your house,  
 Stirring the soya bean shall we two sing and dance  
 Stand up O your beloved is waiting.<sup>21</sup>

This practice of oralizing the actualities and significant events in their lives—in the form of songs—did not cease even till mid-twentieth century when the British colonials

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<sup>19</sup> The Meiteis are one of the neighbouring community of the Hao-Tangkhuls with which they have a long shared history. While the Hao-Tangkhuls are primarily settled in the hills, the Meiteis' homeland are in the valley. Today, the Meiteis are also the majority community in the state of Manipur.

<sup>20</sup> Wungram is a reference to the land of the Hao-Tangkhuls. Wung is identified by some Hao-Tangkhuls as one of the name with which they refer to themselves, before the term Tangkhul became popularized in the present context.

<sup>21</sup> Both the Hao-Tangkhul, as well as the English version of this song is referenced from Shimreingam's article, *The cave born tribes of Manipur and Tangkhul literature*, in the Imphal Times, December 23, 2015.

and Christian missionaries arrived in their midst. In the song mentioned below, the villagers of Lungphu narrates the journey of three of its natives to France, during the First World War.<sup>22</sup> An excerpt from the song is as follows:

*Sipa sita to,  
Chap Ngacha ri rong khavalei  
Yang sang yang lei ho sa.*

*Francesi varam po,  
Mako ya phram kadazalei  
Yang sang yang lei ho sa<sup>23</sup>*

(Free English translation)

By the monuments of the death  
In tears and mourning, we left for war  
Oh, I long for the good old days.

In the land of France,  
Snowfall leaves you cold  
Oh, I long for the good old days.

As detailed above, though there is no documented evidence of a written tradition amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls (until the advent of Colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century), it is for sure that their traditional/folk songs were one of the most important archives of the narratives of the Hao-Tangkhuls.<sup>24</sup> Through songs, each village retained the narratives of their war victories, the deeds of their famed warriors, the landscapes of their abode, and so on. As such, songs were relevant as a historical record not just in the past, but even in the contemporary context, Hao-Tangkhuls still do rely on these songs in the discourses of their society. In some instance, such is the mandate of these songs that, in a recent land dispute between the village of Halang and Phungcham,<sup>25</sup> the case was decided in favour of Halang,

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<sup>22</sup> Around 1200 Hao-Tangkhuls were inducted in the British labor Corp, during the 1<sup>st</sup> World War.

<sup>23</sup> The account of this song was related to the researcher by Awo Shimdhar Chahong, a researcher on Hao-Tangkhul folk songs. The three natives of Lungphu village who went to France during the First World War as a part of British Labour Corp were Lepu Makung, Sikhaya Makung and Khavalung Makung.

<sup>24</sup> There is a belief amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls that they used to have a script of their own, but it was alleged that dogs ate the animal skin on which their scripts were written on.

<sup>25</sup> Halang and Phungcham are both villages whose people are considered as *Raphei* amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls. *Raphei* is a term used for the Hao-Tangkhuls in the northern part of the Hao-Tangkhul country. The term is derived from *Taraphei*—a reference to their practices of terrace cultivation on foothills and valleys, which are nearby streams and rivers. (Terrace cultivation is practiced mainly by the villagers in the



based on the specificity of particular places (in their villages) which are mentioned in an aged song, sung in both their villages.

One can wonder if this was an exceptional case, but considering the increasing consciousness amongst many Hao-Tangkhuls to assert and reclaim their identity, it is quite likely that the songs of their forefathers-mothers will have an important place in the future course of their society. As Shimray remarked, “It may be just a song, but it is the only record of the Tangkhul history and culture” (Shimray 2000, 90).

### (ii) Characteristics of their Musical Style

In the past, every Hao-Tangkhul village was a sovereign republic and spoke their village specific language.<sup>26</sup> As a result, only neighboring villages used to be intelligible to each other. So, the songs they sang were not uniformly sung by all Hao-Tangkhuls—it was specific to every village. There were regional variations in tuning and singing styles. However, the overall characteristics of their musical style and practices were the same. Nakhedei,<sup>27</sup> a practicing Hao-Tangkhul musician, opines that most of the tunes that are found in the Northern, Eastern, Western and Southern region of the Hao-Tangkhul hills are similar. The difference is more in the accentuation and style of singing. Similarly, Shimreiwung remarked that “the singing styles of each region is identified with the region’s name. The regional differences were basically concerning with singing styles; and not

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northern and western part of the Hao-Tangkhul country). Some also opined that *Raphei* is probably derived from *Phakhara*—to tattoo. Only the Hao-Tangkhuls known as Raphei, practiced tattooing amongst them.

<sup>26</sup> It was only with the advent of Christian missionaries that the language of Hunphun village came to be spoken as a common Hao-Tangkhul language. It was in this village that Rev. William Pettigrew (the first missionary that reached out to them) began his mission work. He translated the Bible and compiled a Hymnbook in the language of this village—which was then used in his mission amongst all the Hao-Tangkhuls. Over time, this Bible and hymnbook (in the language of Hunphun) was adopted by Hao-Tangkhul converts in their worship. As the strength of Christian population increased, this particular language of Hunphun became widely adopted and it became their lingua-franca, in the long run. But in the domain of their traditional music, every village sang in their own tongue, as it had been, before Christianity.

<sup>27</sup> Soreichan Nakhedei, is a practicing Hao-Tangkhul musician based in Ukhul. He is one of the key founder of ECHOES enterprise. Under this banner a music school is presently being run in Ukhul, Manipur. They are also the organizer of ‘The New Voice’—a singing competition that aims to promote the local talents in the region. The first season of ‘The New Voice’ was successfully completed on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 2016, with participation from various talents across the state of Manipur.

always the type of folk songs” (Shimreiwung 2009, 47). As such, in spite of slight variations in singing styles, the larger traditional musical practice is the same.

Singing of Hao laa amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls is either in solo or in group. But most often it is sung in groups as dictated by the community-oriented life they lived. Group singing is mostly harmonized singing without the accompaniment of musical instruments. It is mostly sung in three parts<sup>28</sup> or voices of the same tune, *Okrei*, *Okla*, and *Khakrei*—which can be translated into Western musical idiom as—soprano, alto, and bass respectively (Ngakang 2014). The melodies are predominantly of the pentatonic scale, and most of the songs are sung with subtle slurring and prolonged sustenance of notes—mostly the ending notes. Often one good songster takes the lead and initiates the singing with the introductory lines—he/ she is soon joined by the rest. This lead songster is not a permanent one; with every new song some other person can similarly initiate the process. Especially in festive occasions, it becomes more like a relay singing where men and women in groups with their raised arm and swaying bodies in unison, immerse themselves in songs after songs. To quote Godden: “their singing is pleasing, being executed in well-toned parts, blending together and forming a pleasant melody, men, and women, in equal numbers, sing together and sometimes men alone. The melody was always in slow time, whatever the nature of the song, joyous or otherwise. They understand the meaning of their song as a rule...” (Godden, 1898, 6).

When it comes to singing in solo, it is either in the form of ballads or most often in the form of sparring conversations amongst friends, peers or lovers. It was a mode of conversation which individuals engage in—to express themselves—as a form of spoken letters. As some of the Hao-Tangkhul elders narrated, while singing even harsh and foul words were more easily coopted, as offense is less taken in songs rather than in a verbal conversation. Moreover, the spontaneous nature of these songs and the creative liberty such songs empower, make it a popular genre amongst young lovers. As such, young lovers used songs as a system to communicate with each other. If a man wanted to address and say something to a woman, he would rather speak through songs. This will again be replied through another appropriate song in response to him (Mongro 1999).

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<sup>28</sup> Some Tangkhuls are of the view that *tenor* is not sung in their traditional music probably because of the high pitch of their languages.

As a society where songs and narratives were learned and retained based entirely on the human memory (of the community), a conspicuous characteristic of Hao-Tangkhol traditional songs is the repetitive qualities that abound in their songs. It would be apt to categorize many of their songs under *strophic structure*—where a specific tune is repeated several times in a song. The repetition is not confined to just the tunes, but even words or a sentence are often repeated. In many of their songs, the ending part of the previous line of a song is sung again in succeeding lines. But such repetitions were performed with specific intent. It was not just a matter of stylistic characteristic; it had functional purposes too. Repetitions aided in establishing a sense of familiarity with a song and enabled everyone in the community to follow, and empathize with the song—making the song all embracing. On top of that, repetition helped in easier retention of the song, as their singing was entirely based on memory. To quote Mills, “(Repetition) it aids in “memory and identification of its listeners” to the point of involvement with the art (Mills 1974, 32).

*Iram shongshanli shilimthing, Shilimthing, shilimthing;  
Thusuo nu lingluo shilimthing, Shilimthing Thusuonu lingluo?  
Thusuonu lingluo Shilimthing, Shilimthing, shilimthing;  
Eisuonu linga, shilimthing, Shilimthing eisuonulinga.  
Eisuonu linga, shilimthing, Shilimthing, shilimthing;  
Arang sangkayei. Arang sangkayei, Arangkhol,  
Arangkhol, Arangkhol, Eiva leishiyei (2times)*

In our village hillock, oak tree, oak tree, oak tree;  
Whose lover had planted oak tree, oak tree whose lover planted?  
Whose lover planted oak tree, oak tree, oak tree;  
My lover had planted oak tree, oak tree my lover planted.  
My lover planted oak tree, oak tree, oak tree;  
Hornbill came to Rest; hornbill came to rest; hornbill Song,  
Hornbill Song; I love to hear.<sup>29</sup>

Besides repetition, a strong rhythm is another peculiar characteristic of the Hao-Tangkhol musical expression. Like the rest of the Nagas, Hao-Tangkhol have a keen sense of rhythm. As repetition was necessitated by the oral nature of their musicking, their rhythms were also influenced by the actualities of their lifestyles. As such, the rhythmic

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<sup>29</sup> The Hao-Tangkhol version as well as the English translation of this song is referenced from Chihansung Pharung’s dissertation, *Tangkhol Naga Folk Music and its relevance for Christian Ministry in Tangkhol Churches*, 2009. Submitted to ‘Jubilee Memorial Bible College,’ Madras.

patterns in their traditional music usually imitate their physical labor—pounding of food grains, the rhythmic plantation of rice plants in their fields, the strike of axes while felling a tree, and so on. Such rhythms are most prominent in their *Pheichak* (dance) and *Khamahon*, which is a very peculiar musical expression of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas that cannot be neatly categorized in Western musical idioms. For lack of better words, perhaps one can understand Khamahon as “non-lyrical harmonic chanting, non-lyrical harmonic vocalization” or “pulsation of successive chordal voices looped in a sequence.”<sup>30</sup> In the course of a Khamahon, there is also an occasional burst of loud sustained cry with a tremolo effect, which is known as *kakahang* (Shimreiwung 2009).

Till date serious attempts to present Khamahon in Western musical tablature is quite unknown. But one such attempt is available in the form of *tonic solfa*, as mentioned in the writings of Khayi:<sup>31</sup>

1. Khakrei (Bass)..... Ha: ha: ha: /
2. Khavao (Soprano) ...Ah: ah: ah: /
3. Okla (Alto).....Oh: oh: oh: /
4. Okra (Tenor) .....Ai: ai: ai: /

She further presents the various types of Khamahon as such:

Muvalā/ Kamolā Akhano (the nature of the chant when ceremonies such as marriage, house dedication and childbirth is observed):-/Ah: - ai/ hei:-hei/ ah: ai:ai:ah/hei:/  
 Luiwut Laa akhano (tree felling Khamahon):-/Oh:hak: ah/ hak-hak-hak-hak/  
 Luivāt akhano (khamahon during cultivation):-/ Oh: hei: oh/ha:ha:hah:  
 Mahā akhano (harvest Khamahon):- ah: hei:ai:hei:pi/hei:hei:/  
 Malā Akhano: - : ai:hei/hei: hak/hau:-hau:/  
 (Khayi 1997, 314-315).

As evident from the above descriptions, Khamahon, aside from accompanying Hao-Tangkhul dances and performances in their festivals and ritual ceremonies, they were also practiced in everyday life situations and activities. Such actualities of everyday life, in turn, influenced their Khamahon. The heavy vocalization of the males, the monosyllabic

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<sup>30</sup> Descriptions by Rewben Mashangva, a renowned Hao-Tangkhul musician and a proponent of Hao-Tangkhul traditional music. His musical style is an amalgamation of Blues and Hao-Tangkhul traditional music—which he refers to, as Naga folk blues.

<sup>31</sup> Sinalei Khayi is a researcher based in Manipur. Her primary work are on art, crafts and culture of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas.

harmonization of the females, and the pounding rhythmic patterns in their khamahon are allusions to the influences of nature in their musical repertoire—calls of birds and animals, howling winds, running water, etc.<sup>32</sup> In fact, rendering of birds calls, such as *keo keo* (chicken) *tui tui* (Cuckoo) and *sui sui* (Nightingale) are a regular feature in many of their songs. As some of the Hao-Tangkhul elders opined, probably it is out of the imitation of nature's sounds that in their songs, especially in the beginning and end, they often sing non-lyrical monosyllables—Oh, hau, ha, eh, ya, etc.<sup>33</sup>

### (iii) Types of Hao Laa

Musicking amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls was an everyday affair. It developed directly as an integral part of their lives in everyday activities and social interactions, which arises out of various life situations (Ngakang 2014). Their music was not just for amusement; it was functional and purposeful. Their songs assisted in propitiating the spirits, motivating young warriors during war, courtships, healings, labor, etc.—and significantly in reiterating and strengthening the bond of the community. As such, there are many types of songs that were sung as per the occasion, season, and as per the specific activity entailed. Some of the major types of songs are as follows:

- Rai Laa (War songs)

These are songs that were sung to commemorate the narratives of war—songs of praises and oath to the greatness of one's village and the bravery of their warriors, as well as a chiding against neighboring villages which had been at war with the aforementioned village, at some point in time. Apart from being a repository of the victorious feats of a village and their heroes, these songs were also sung to inspire and instill a sense of pride amongst the young Hao-Tangkhul men—to defend and bring glory to one's village.

In the pre-Christian days, as every Hao-Tangkhul village was a village republic, guarding one's village boundary and uplifting the pride of the village was a crucial duty of

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<sup>32</sup> In the course of fieldwork, the researcher came across such observation/comments made by elderly Hao-Tangkhuls.

<sup>33</sup> These syllable are free rendition by the author (and others) and not necessarily a technically precise musical rendition.

every abled man in a village. Moreover, climbing the ladder of social recognition and winning the favor and love of a Hao-Tangkhul maiden depended on the number of heads a man could capture. So, waging war with rival villages was a necessity for every Naga village, and hence songs of war abounded. Here is an excerpt from one of the many Phungcham village's *Rai laa*:

*Oh hung hung, heng heng lei  
Hung, hung, heng heng lei, thuina salo?  
Arai Phungcham na saia,  
Kuirei, Kanhang teneijillei  
Okthui Kharei, okthui khanao  
Oh, ram kachina ngazek,  
Phungcham Yangrei ram.*

Oh, great noise is coming  
Great noise who makes?  
There Phungcham makes,  
Kuirei, Kanhang village wants to surrender  
The world now, the world after  
Oh, every village talks,  
Phungcham the great king's country.<sup>34</sup>

- Luisao /Luishom Laa (Ploughing/Planting songs)

These are work songs which were sung during the season of plowing of fields, and plantation of rice saplings. These songs are often in a call and response pattern, and all the vocable phrases do not necessarily have intelligible meanings.

Amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, working in the field was a communal activity and rarely an individual's or one family's task. The culture of working in groups was imparted early in life, as most of the youngsters work in their age-group—*yarnao* (Shimreiwung 2009). While working in the field, they engage in singing songs and shouting in rhythmic voice, along with the rhythm and pace of their work. The idea behind singing while working was “to transform the experience of their work” (Gioa 2006)—to make their physical labor less draining and enjoyable, and to instill a spirit of camaraderie and communion amongst the people.

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<sup>34</sup> Both the Hao-Tangkhul version and English translation of this song is referenced from M.Horam's *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas*, 1997, B.R.Publication, New Delhi.

Above that, their work songs also served as a marker of time. As Shimreiwung noted, “there are particular songs that are sung at the beginning of the work, before resting for lunch and at the end of the work. Thus, the songs performed symbolically represent the passage of time and progress of work” (Shimreiwung 2009, 144).

*Khayingli lungluo, ngakhuili shulou*  
*Ngahao chakchei ngahuru ritiya*  
*Puo thot manaoyei*

Dibble in Khaying (April- May) be like the makhui<sup>35</sup>  
 Then field work will be late  
 Ngahao flower fading, looking downward.<sup>36</sup>

- Meisum Laa (Courtship songs)

Meisum laa are songs of courtship that were sung in *Longshim*, the youth dormitories of the Hao-Tangkhuls. In the past, every village had their own dormitory: *Ngalalong* and *Mayarlong*—the female and male dormitory, respectively.<sup>37</sup> Courtship in such dormitories entailed singing amongst young Hao-Tangkhul men and maidens—often, in the form of conversations while expressing one’s desire, longing, and love. These songs are usually short, spontaneous, and the verses were sung in a playful manner.

Besides the *Longshim*, songs of courtship and love were also sung on the road, in their fields, courtyard of a family with women, and so on. To a large extent, such songs were sung primarily by men so that their lovers could hear them. Given below is a meisum laa about a man who eagerly awaits his lover:

*Sangai maralei,*  
*Khamongli imik sausei,*  
*Sha khangai, manu ngahan a,*  
*Manu ngahana, yarwonnao mawung ngaireo a.*

Sweetheart has not yet come,  
 On the door, my eyes are fixed,  
 Sweetheart smiles and talks,

<sup>35</sup> Makhui is a Hao-Tangkhul word for June, which literally means ‘race’ (running a race) (Khay 1997, 117).

<sup>36</sup> Both the Hao-Tangkhul version and English translation of the song is referenced from Sinalei Khay’s dissertation, *Tangkhul Arts and Crafts: A study in their Cultural significance*, 1997. Submitted to the department of history, Manipur University.

<sup>37</sup> Unlike many other Naga tribes, Hao-Tangkhuls youth dormitories (*Longshim*) were not independently constructed structures, rather, it was attached to the residents of the village chief or wealthy individuals in the village.

Smiles and talks, young man does not want to go away.<sup>38</sup>

- Thisham/Kathi laa (Death songs)

In the past, Hao-Tangkhuls' belief was that the souls of the death remain on earth as they are attached to the land of its sojourn, and thus they often required assistance from their living relatives to help them journey into *Kazeiram* (land of the death). So, during this festival the village priest performs various ceremonial rites, to intercedes with *Kokto* (the guardian of Kazeiram)—so that the souls of the dead will be received. With this belief, Hao-Tangkhuls commemorated *Thisham* festival in order to carry out the processes of paving the way for the souls of dead people, to journey to Kazeiram. On the last day of the festival, the relatives of the dead people carrying lighted pine torches march outside the village gate, singing and dancing all along, as they bid farewell to the souls of their dead relatives. The songs sung on this occasion had to be appropriate to the deceased person, and they are strictly prohibited from singing in any other occasion, besides the rite of this festival. Failing to do so were alleged to have brought about misfortunes on one's self and family (Ngakang 2014).

*Iramli Thishamli*  
*Lakhokva Thuithihaowa*  
*Ngafariya, Kazeiram*  
*Kazeiram shirimei yarilo!*  
*Chungna vaya, chungna vaya*  
*Thingreikong meila shar*  
*Chara ngayaya*

My village is observing Thisham  
 Noblewoman had passed away  
 Gloomy kazeiram  
 May kazeiram be more harmonious and joyous!  
 Many had gone, many had gone  
 Lighting pine through woods and river  
 My tears keep flowing<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Both the Hao-Tangkhul and English translation of this song is referenced from M.Horam's *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas*, 1997, B.R.Publication, New Delhi.

<sup>39</sup> The Tangkhul version of the song is referenced from T.Luikham's *Wung (Tāngkhul) Naga Okthot Mayonzā*, 2013. English translations by Yaoreipam Makang.



- Pet Laa (Bed songs)

Pet laa are one of the peculiar practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls. The literal translation of the words being *Bed songs*. Often these songs are conversations between husband and wife as they lay in bed, at dawn, or at night before they retire to sleep. The themes of such songs are mostly about dreams of the previous night or reminiscence of past days. At times they are even considered as an omen or premonition of tragic events that lie ahead.

*Menglashiya O shamyo, mi thuisawalo! \*  
*hh atlung ngaya menglimshu,*  
*Ohh ipha tharamle.*  
*Ohh ipha tharamle,*  
*O Halam thangrisi,*  
*O Isa ngaraam saya.*  
*Isa ngaraam saya,*  
*O Halam thangkhane...*

(Free English translation)

An ominous dream I had O love, do lit up the hearth!  
 Last night in my dream,  
 Ohh my body trembles.  
 Ohh my body trembles,  
 O in Halam's forest,  
 O my body was ripped into pieces,  
 Cut up into bits,  
 O by thousands of Halam...<sup>40</sup>

Besides the aforementioned type of songs, there are several other songs depending on the occasion and season. In the past, there was no name for all the days and month as they do now, but seasons were marked by their agricultural cycle and their songs accordingly. The whole agricultural calendar year was reduced to songs (Khayir 1997). Concomitantly, there are several seasonal and agricultural songs, such as *Yangyir Laa* (Autumn songs), *Kanrei Laa* (Spring songs), *Zur Laa* (summer songs) and *Si Laa* (Winter songs), *Mangkhap Laa* (Song of the end of paddy transplantation), *Dharreo Laa* (Song of plucking new crops), *Lui-Kathui Laa* (Song of first paddy transplantation), *Matha-thuk Laa* (songs of sowing paddy), *Khaikap Laa* (song that marks the end of harvest season),

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<sup>40</sup> Halam is a reference to the present Hungpung village in Ukhrul.

*Dharshat Laa* (Song of first paddy harvest), *Chumri Laa* (Song to the goddess of the barn) and *Chumphut Laa* (granary song) (Pharung 2009).

Apart from the seasonal songs, there are also festive and occasional songs such as *Mawonzai Laa* (Song of prayer and sacrifices), *Phashai- Long Laa* (Song of eating and feasting), *Kameo Khamui Laa* (Song to take away plaques and famine), *Chap chat Laa* (Song of mourning) *Tantak Laa* (songs sung while returning home from the field and vice versa), *Shimshak Laa* (songs sung during construction of a house) etc.

#### (iv) Hao-Tangkhul Traditional Musical Instruments

The following is the categorization of Hao-Tangkhul traditional musical instruments as per the classification system developed by Sachs and Hornbostel (known as the Sachs-Hornbostel system). This system of dividing musical instruments into four classes—*idiophones*, *membranophones*, *chordophones*, and *aerophones*, is based on the material that is vibrating as well as on the procedures for setting vibrations in motion (Peseye 2009).

- **Idiophones:** In such instruments, the substance of the instrument itself yields the sounds, without the need of a stretched membranes or strings. Instruments under the class of idiophones are usually of stone, wood, metal, or bone—solid, non-stretchable, resonant material (Peseye 2009).

##### *Mazui*

*Mazui* is a harmonica-like instrument made out of reed. It consists of a flexible tongue cut out of a reed. It is played holding in the mouth. The mouth acts as the resonator and also controls the pitch of the note produced (Pharung 2009). This musical instrument was not used in festivals, dances, or other important occasions. Rather, it functioned more like a private instrument played for one's own pleasure (Peseye 2009). In the past, the *mazui* was also the only musical instrument that was played by Hao-Tangkhul women—mostly inside *Ngalalong*, the girl's dormitory of the Hao-Tangkhuls.

##### *Simpung/Sinphung (Gong)*

*Simpung* is a type of gong made out of brass or bronze with a “cylindrical protrusion in the middle.” It is either struck with bare hands or a stick. It is used mostly in festive occasions,

funerals or as an alarm call. Owning a Siphung/siphung used to be a mark of status amongst the pre-Christian Hao-Tangkhuls. As Shimray pointed out, “Commoners called *Vahongnao* seldom owned Siphung” (Shimray 2000).

*Ruku/Rugu (Log drum)*

The *Ruku* is a wooden log drum used by many Naga tribes. It is a drum chiseled out from huge (single) tree trunk, usually of mahogany. The tree trunk is hollowed out from the inside completely, and a slit opening runs throughout the length of the log drum. *Ruku* is usually ten to fifteen meters in length and four to five feet in circumference. Large dumb-bell made out of wood are used to strike the log drum producing loud “echoing/bumming” sound. *Ruku* was usually installed in the village dormitories (Longshim/Morung) and were beaten only by men.

In the past, the making and bringing of *ruku* into a village were done amidst festivities and rituals. It was believed that a favorable *ruku* yielded a good harvest, but if an unfavorable tree was felled, calamity ensues in the village. So they zealously looked out for omens and took great measure to select the most favorable tree, in the making of a *ruku*. Animals were sacrificed even before a tree was felled. Before a *ruku* was carved out of a tree, Hao-Tangkhuls had a customary practice of putting the blame on an animal to thwart the wrath of evil spirits that might have inhabited the tree that was to be felled. So, they would chide an animal, usually a dog, for felling the tree. Then, they would kill the animal to appease the spirit that dwelled in that particular tree. However, this practice was confined more with the Hao-Tangkhuls in the West and Northern part of their country. The South-Eastern Hao-Tangkhuls, don’t do the blaming ceremony before a *ruku* is brought into the village. Instead, in their villages, people dance around the log drum with a war cry and threats of spearing the drum—in order to drive out the evil spirits that might have inhabited the log drum (Khay 1997).

In the past, *ruku* played a huge social role in the lives of the Hao-Tangkhuls. Rather than being primarily used as a musical instrument, the *ruku* was employed for purposes of communication within a village, and also to its neighboring villages. Depending on the message that was conveyed, the beating of the drum varied. Some of the usage of log drums amongst the (Hao-Tangkhuls) Nagas was as such: to give clarion calls for public meetings; raise fire alarms; announce raids and attacks by neighbouring villages; to herald victorious

head-hunting expeditions; to announce tiger or wild boar chases; while mourning for the moon and the sun during lunar and solar eclipses—during these events, some of the Naga ancestors believed that they (the moon and the sun) were being devoured by a huge tiger; looked upon as the village deity, who protects, guides, and blessed its worshipers (Mongro 1999).

- **Membranophones:** Musical instruments where the sound is produced by striking “tightly-stretched membranes.”

#### *Phung/Pung*

Phung is a type of drum made out of cylindrical dry wood, with an animal hide stretched over one or both the sides of the hollow wood. It is usually decorated with a laced cane. The size of the phung varies, but the most common sizes seem to be those within the range of twenty-four to twenty-eight inches long, with a circumference ranging from forty to sixty inches. A cane belt tied to each end of the drum enables the drummer to carry it on his shoulder (Peseye 2009).

Phung was used during their festivities to accompany their songs and dances. It is also alleged to be more popular amongst the Southern and Eastern Hao-Tangkhuls. Phung, like the log drum, is played only by men.

- **Chordophones:** The musical instruments included in this category are those in which strings are stretched to fixed points on a body.

#### *Tingteila*

Tingteila is probably the most popular musical instrument amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls. It is a fiddle-like instrument with a single string stretched over a body, and a long neck with a head. The body is made of half gourd and plastered with pig’s bladder or skin of a goat. The string is fastened by a peg on both ends of the gourd, and a key is attached at the end of slender wood or bamboo. The bow is also made of slender bamboo or wood, and the strings on both the body and the bow are made from the hair of animal’s tail—often, a horse or a cow.

While playing the tingteila, the body/resonator is placed against the chest of the player unlike that of a violin. Tingteila is used to accompany singing in small groups or solo, and not in large groups. It is played mainly by men even though there are no such restrictions on its use by a female. In the past, there were strict social rules as to when it can and cannot be played. It was a belief amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls that playing the tingteila during harvest season results in clipping the stems of rice plants. So, playing the tingteila before harvest was considered a taboo.

- **Aerophones:** Aerophones consists of all musical instruments in which the air is the main vibrating factor.

#### *Sipa*

*Sipa* is a flute made out of bamboo with a solid end and an opening on the other end. The length of the *sipa* is about 18 inches approximately. The common name *sipa* came into being only much later with the popularity of the six holes flute. Earlier there used to be a flute of unconventional length which had only two holes near the opening and was known by different names, such as Laolā, Hung, Yāngkahui, and Kalu in different Hao-Tangkhul villages (Pharung 2009).

*Sipa* is played on its own and was not used to accompany in singing. Often it was played by buffalo or cowherds as they strolled along with their herds. Like the tingteila, there were restrictions on the use of the *sipa*. It was a belief amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls that any wind instruments could not be used once transplantation of paddy begins and until harvest had been completed. The reason for this restriction was based on the belief that rice paddies will be destroyed from the wind that arises as a result of the playing of such musical instruments.

#### *Talla*

*Talla* is a trumpet made out of a peculiar bamboo known as *Sita*. On the opposite end of the mouthpiece, a Mithun or Buffalo horn is fitted to amplify the sound of the trumpet. The length and size of the trumpet vary. The thin *talla* is of five to six feet in length, with a short horn attached at the end, while the shorter *talla* is made of a foot and a half horn, roughly trimmed and cut square on the wider edge of the horn. In the narrow end, a wooden mouthpiece of 2-3 inches is fitted, which is cut oblique at the mouthpiece (Pharung 2009).

Talla is mostly played in musical performances and festivals, to initiate singing and dancing but it does not accompany during the act of singing. Besides its place in a musical context, the tallā was also used for scaring wild animals, as well as for war cries. Being associated with war, women were forbidden from playing the tallā.

As we can observe from the aforementioned details of Hao-Tangkhul traditional musical instruments, one realizes that their musical instruments were not always necessarily used for musicking. They fulfilled various other social needs of their lives. The construction, regulation, and practices of their musical instruments embodied their beliefs and value systems. They were attuned by, and were an outcome of the influences of their way of living—the political economy, their socio-religious practices, their practical skills and the actualities of their lives. One can perhaps assert that Hao-Tangkhul musical instruments were one of the ways in which their social and cultural identity were constructed and maintained (Dawe 2012).

#### (v) Hao Laa as Poems

Haimendorf writing on the significance of songs in the life of the (Konyak) Nagas stated that, “songs not only reflect the Konyak’s attitude to many aspects of life, they are the principal and recognized medium through which the individuals, as well as the group, expresses their most intense emotions” (Haimendorf 1943, 70). Such was the case with the Hao-Tangkhuls too. Their songs were indeed the finest and principal medium through which the aspirations, beliefs, and sentiments of their lives were expressed. The closely knitted community that they were, no songs bear the authorial name of an individual. It was authored collectively, and their songs were the wealth of the whole village or a clan. A song might begin with the composition of a few creative individuals, but for the songs to continue in their musical-social repertoire, they were to be processed and accepted by the community. If they agree with what he/she expresses, then it becomes their voices as well. Words and themes were added or dropped; tunes were tweaked as per the need of the community. Everyone was invited to contribute his or her share in the communal recreation of the song (Ngakang 2014). As a result, the songs that continued to circulate were the ones that expressed not just the sentiments of an individual, but the societal expectations of the

community too. These are the songs that outlived generations after generations and do not really have a chronological beginning and end.

Polished and retained through the need and creative embellishment of the community, their songs are the finest lyrical expressions of the Hao-Tangkhuls. Songs are the embodiments of their artistic expressions. Perhaps, it will not be a stretch to claim that their songs are poetry sung aloud. In the composition of many of their songs, repetitions of tunes, words, and sentences not only aided in the rhythm in their singing and the retention of a song, but such practices also structured systematic rhyming scheme in their lyrical text. In the short love ballad “Zimkumthei Shailuiya,” a song comparing women to Pahu flower, one can clearly observe the usage of ABA rhyme scheme:

*Zingkhumthei Shailuiya*  
*Ngalanao Pahuwon,*  
*Pahuwon thada rawona*

*Zimikla shokluiya*  
*Ngalanaoa Pahuwon,*  
*Pahuwon thada rawona*

*Kashan kachon tharluiya*  
*Ngalanaoa Pahuwon*  
*Pahuwon thada rawona.*<sup>41</sup>

Symbolism, metaphor, and eroticism also abound in their songs. This is most prevalent in praises to the physical beauty of women. As Ngakang noted, “Symbolism is the core of the oral verse. The young maidens are compared to buds; young boys are compared to bamboo shoots, the beautiful breasts of the girls are compared to ripe mangoes, beautiful black and long hair of women are compared to the tail of a horse” (Ngakang 2014, 172). In a popular *Meisum Laa*, “Iram Shongshanli” women are compared to *kahaothei* (chestnuts) droppings in their villages for young Hao-Tangkhul men to court. *Shupshai*, a term used in the song is an act of eating—a possible reference to consummation.

*Iram Shongshanli,*  
*Oh, kahaothei chungmei chatālo.*  
*Chungmei Chatālo,*

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<sup>41</sup> This song is extracted from Ringkahao’s *The Tangkhul Folk Poetry (Hao Laa) in song*, 2013.

*Ram yāron shupshaishangrali,  
 Ram yāron shokkhamarona.  
 Oh, shokkhamarona,  
 Zingkhumthei shupshai phalunga.*

(Free English Translation)

On the edges of our village's paths,  
 Oh, let there be more chestnut droppings.  
 Let there be more,  
 Village lads are on their way, to consume and devour  
 Smart and youthful lads,  
 Oh, nature's bounty is their spoils.

Another prominent feature of Hao-Tangkhul traditional songs is the generous incorporation of motifs of nature—birds, flowers, and animals. Their relationship with nature was such that many of their folktales, songs, and myths abound with human metamorphosing into birds, animals, and insects, etc.<sup>42</sup> They were either incorporated by direct human rendering of their sounds—as characters, or as metaphorical and symbolical allusions.

Mentioned below is a short *Pet Laa* (Bed song), in which a mother tells her son about an ominous dream. Here, a male deer is used as the symbol of death.

Naomayara:

*“Oh, Ayai!  
 Ita shaophunglakha,  
 Oh ayai!  
 Khi mang thamanlo?”  
 Ava:  
 “Oh Chaowo  
 Shemhui thamanei,  
 Oh, khimang khalo!  
 Masarmeng.”*

(Free English translation)

Son:  
 “Oh, mother!  
 Nursing me in your womb,  
 Oh, mother!

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<sup>42</sup> Hornbill is one such bird which figures prominently in the songs and tales of not only the Hao-Tangkhuls, but with many of the other Naga tribes too.



What thou dreamt of?”

Mother:

“Oh a graceful deer

I dreamt of,

Oh, what a dream!

A dream of death.”

Such ominous songs also reveals the significance of songs in their life. Often, they fairly reveal the beliefs of the community. In the pre-Christian days of the Hao-Tangkhuls, before venturing into any important work or action, they looked out for omens and signs to direct the course of their actions. For them, every phenomenon had a meaning; a meaning that foretold the future actions. So, dreams were interpreted as communications with “unforeseen power” (Shimray 2000). Even the spirits of dead family members were alleged to have actively participated in the life of the living—by taking the form of animals, birds, and insects, or appearing in the dreams of their relatives. As such, till date, the villagers of Halang still sing an aged song which was an oralisation of a conversation between a living person and the spirit of a dead man. The story behind the song was that several ages ago when the Hao-Tangkhuls were still living as non-Christians, Nanshai Huileng who was living in *Kazeiram*,<sup>43</sup> visited the realm of the living, and called upon his wife (who was alive then), one fine day. But unfortunately, his wife couldn’t hear him, as he was only present in spirit. So, Nanshai visited his brother-in-law Ronhung Chamroy in his dream and communicated to him how much he missed his wife, Anotla. This conversation with the deceased, Ronhung conveyed to his sister Anotla. So the story goes.

Over time, this conversation between the dead person Nanshai and his brother-in-law Ronhung got oralised in the form of a song.

*Nang phayuriyeh alip mawo khangai*  
*Mayung nayei kazeiram*  
*Oh mawo khangai*  
*Atzam naliteh leishiyeh*  
*Oh atzam ngali chiteh,*  
*Oh phanang thangtza viri Anot teh leishiye*  
*Oh viri Anot chiteh,*  
*Oh Yangteh vaoleh mashayeh*  
*Oh vaoeh masha aneh*  
*Naomak khak Ngaiya lishayeh*

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<sup>43</sup> Land of the death

*Oh Naomak khak Ngaiyali  
 Oh Khani thangkha Chan ung khangashan long leishiyeh  
 Oh atzam ngali chiteh,  
 Oh phanangtza I hue nangra kanraneh.*

Oh, such somberness!  
 This underworld I panteth no to travel there.  
 I panteth not to journey there again,  
 All this nostalgia on earth,  
 I'm so in love with.  
 Reminiscence of that beloved wife of mine, made me longed for her.  
 I cry, and cry out to her in the courtyard,  
 But in deep slumber she was.  
 Oh in deep slumber she was, in deep slumber she was;  
 Khakngaiya my brother in law then woke me to cry.  
 And for two endless nights, we sat together.  
 In longing and reminiscing for that life on earth,  
 This mind and soul of mine have dried out.<sup>44</sup>

Songs being an expression of deep sentiments of the community, the lyrical contents of their songs were also embellished with choicest of words—words which they might not necessarily use in everyday conversation. Expressing one's sentiment through singing enabled the Hao-Tangkhuls to imaginatively play with words and nurture their creative potentials. Such exercises in creative compositions brought out the best in their languages and also sustained the longevity of aged words which might cease—left on its own, in daily speaking. As a result, their traditional songs are incorporated with poetic and reverential words—words, which are often unintelligible to many. Possibly, it is for these reasons that many elderly Hao-Tangkhuls usually remark that their Hao laa (Hao song) are not just the records of their narratives, but they are also the richest repository of their numerous languages.

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<sup>44</sup> English translation by Wungrammung Chamroy.

## Concluding Remarks

As we have detailed in the above segments, musicking was indeed a vital aspect in the lives of Hao-Tangkhuls. Their traditional music developed out of and were a part of their daily life activities in various life situations. It was a response and expressions shaped by the actualities of their lives, and consequently richly interwoven with the fabric of their religious, social, economic and political realities. This impressed upon their musicking, their worldview of the *community above the individual*. Everyone was thus a participant in their musical practices in festive occasions, celebrations, as well as in times of mourning. No one was an idle spectator. There were no distinct divisions of an audience and performers, a musician, and a non-musician. Even if there were special performances by groups of individuals on favorable occasions (such as weddings, festivals, etc.), there were no such prolonged or rather categorical groupings of the performers from the crowd. In fact, non-participation in such occasions were dealt with punitive measures. It was considered a social aberration not to participate in their community musicking. Remarkably, except for the use of their traditional musical instruments, there was also no segregation of sexes in their musicking—neither in their festivals nor in their daily life activities—it was always in groups. The conception of the *community over the individual* made every person's participation, a mandatory.

As a result of this underpinning of their worldview (musicking), no songs were credited or identified with an individual, rather, only collectively—of a clan or a village; and so was the existence and longevity of a song, or the musical expressions of an individual, contingent on the collective appropriation and need of the community. It was only as a collective identity that they musically express themselves—it was a collective musicking as their collective life entailed. Consequently, transmission of their music also occurred primarily in community participation of music activities that were a part of a socio-cultural occasions or settings (Ngakang 2014). It was in such collective musical practice that the younger generation were exposed to their music, and eventually, in their participation in social life, they learned their music.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> A) As an oral society (in the past), music making and learning amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls was entirely based on listening (by ear). They was no musical notations or sheets. It was musicking based on listening, memorization, and varied improvisation within certain framework or situation.

In conclusion, it is worth reiterating that the traditional musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls was not just an expression of aesthetics or their creative abilities. Neither was it a just a reflection of their worldview, rather, it was an extension of it. Musicking was a functional response that their way of living called for—an integral part of the *habitus* that not only shaped their life views and actions but also molded their musical style. It was a way of living. And in this living, the community was always placed above the individual—the individual was for the community, and not the other way round. As Shimray rightly observed, “Naga individuals knew no other life except that of community life. All things were done in groups and in the full presence of the entire community. The individual had no existence apart from the community” (Shimray 1985, 121).

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B) In this collective musical practice, their *Longshim* (Youth dormitories) played a significant role. Singing and dancing were frequently organized in these dormitories. Here, aged Hao-Tangkhul elders and senior inmates in these dormitories, assist in imparting the younger inmates the art of singing and dancing, besides life skills of various sorts—weaving, warfare skills, woodcrafts, etc. These learnings were not just inculcation and nurturing of necessary life skills and practices of the community, but it was a process of imparting the narratives of their forefathers to the younger generation—for them to imbibe and sustain their *way of life*.

## CHAPTER 3

### Colonialism, Christianity, and Changes in Music

*“Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.”*<sup>46</sup>

On a quiet Sunday morning, the sounds of church bells ring throughout the Hao-Tangkhul country—beckoning villagers for the morning gospel service. In some of the big villages, recorded hymnals are blared from the Church horn-loudspeakers, almost creating the aura of a Sabbath even before one steps into the Church. In the afternoon, young children go to Sunday schools—here, they sing Christian songs;<sup>47</sup> memorize Bible verses and learn about the deeds of Christ and the many stories that are mentioned in the Bible. Then, in the evening, there is mass gathering in their churches, where the congregation sing hymns<sup>48</sup> and listen to the sermon for the night.

If one were to imagine the region a century ago, it would have been quite a different story. No day would have been marked out as an auspicious day over the others on a weekly basis. Rather, it would be the agricultural season and the events and festivities that evolve around such a way of life which would have dictated when a particular day would be considered auspicious. Even when they would gather, it would be the thumping sound of their *rukus* (log drum) instead of the church bells that would reach out to all the populace in their villages. The songs that they would sing and the musical instruments that they would have played, would also have had an acoustic character quite different from what it is in the present.

In this chapter, the endeavor is to trace how these significant changes have come about in Hao-Tangkhul society—by locating Hao-Tangkhul musicking in the trajectory of the larger socioeconomic and religious changes that took place in their society—on their encounters with Christianity and Colonialism in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. In this effort, the intent will be to draw attention to the consequences of

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<sup>46</sup> Psalm 95, Verses 1-2 in the Bible (New International Version).

<sup>47</sup> These are mainly songs in Western genre—it can either be action songs or just singings accompanied with the guitar or clap of hands, etc. The lyrical content of the songs are either praises to god or exalting the young children to be Christ like. Most of the songs are sung in English.

<sup>48</sup> Hymns are a style or genre of Christian religious songs sung in praise, and as prayers to god.

these encounters on the Hao-Tangkhul people and its consequential impact on Hao-Tangkhul musical practice.

## **The Advent of Christianity**

Missionary work amongst the Nagas started with Mr. and Mrs. Miles Bronson around 1838. Their work was confined to the Nagas in Namsang, a village in the present state of Arunachal Pradesh. However, before they could make much inroad into their missionary enterprise, they had to leave their mission midway due to ill health (Puthenpurakal 1984). Additionally, as documented by Brown,<sup>49</sup> the growing suspicion amongst the Nagas of the Christian missionaries as agents of the British Company, may have made their work much more difficult. In a letter informing *The Baptist Board for Foreign Missions for the United States*, of relinquishing the Naga mission in favor of the Assamese mission, Brown wrote:

It is true a great deal of interest has been manifested by Capt. Jenkins and other officers of the Government, and liberal donations have been offered by them and also directly by the Government, but I have long since suspected that one great object in urging us on amongst these Savage mountain tribes, who have never yet acknowledged their subjection to the English rule, is that we may be the instruments of extending their sway over them (cited in Puthenpurakal 1984, 53).

With the departure of the Bronsons, significant missionary work amongst the Nagas began only from 1872 onwards—with the arrival of American Baptist missionaries, Mr. Edward Winter Clark and Mrs. Mary Mead Clark. By then, other American Baptist missionaries, including the Clarks, had extensively worked among the Assamese but without much success at conversion. Coupled with this, the ill health of Mrs. Clark, conflicting missionary work with other missionaries, and the possible prospect of success among the hill tribes finally led Mr. and Mrs. Clark to settle in the Naga Hills. Here, their mission was largely successful. In their missionary enterprise of about nine years amongst the Nagas,<sup>50</sup> the husband and wife duo were responsible for setting up four stations in the Naga Hills—the Ao Mission station at Impur, the Angami Mission station at Kohima, the Lotha station at Vankosang and the Sema station at Aizuto. These stations served not just

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<sup>49</sup> Mr. Nathan Brown was a Christian missionary associated with the *American Baptist missionary*.

<sup>50</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Clark worked continuously for sixteen years with the Assam Mission, seven years between Sibsagor and the Naga Hills, and nine years in the Naga Hills (Puthenpurakal 1984:69-70).

the particular communities in which they were located, but it also helped in ministering in the neighboring communities too (Mepfhü-o 2015).

But amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls and the Nagas in the present state of Manipur, Christian missionary work began only with the arrival of Rev. William Pettigrew and his wife Mrs. Alice Pettigrew in 1894—two decades after Mr. & Mrs. Clark began their mission amongst the Nagas in the present state of Nagaland. Initially, Pettigrew intended to work amongst the Meiteis in Manipur and had already set up a school in Imphal<sup>51</sup> where he worked as a teacher. But due to restrictions imposed by the British authority on carrying out mission work amongst the orthodox Hindu Meiteis, in order to avoid antagonism between the British colonialists and the Meiteis, he couldn't proceed with his mission (Zeliang 2005). However, he was given the permission to stay in the state of Manipur as long as he confined his missionary enterprise amongst the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas in the hills, “at his own risk” (Solo & Mahangthei 2006). Thus, his work began amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls in 1896, and from then on Christian mission work spread throughout the other hill communities in Manipur—through Pettigrew, as well as through the native Christian converts.

Aside from the zeal and intent of the individual Christian missionaries, what is intriguing in their arrival amongst the Nagas, is the role that colonial design played in paving the way for these Christian missionaries. We can trace its early steps in the establishment of tea plantations by the East India Company in the Northeastern region of India. Colonial administrators with the intention to protect their commercial interests, as well as to extend their rule amongst the various communities in the region, invited the Western Christian missionaries to ‘tame’ and ‘civilize’ the ‘savages’ in the hills. The missionary movement was seen as the most effective force of colonization, as it involved not only non-use of physical force (which cost them less resource), but also because the missionaries “penetrated more deeply into the life of the people” (Dena 1983, 16). As Vashum noted, “the British saw an opportunity to extend its administration that would minimize greatly the state's treasury working through the missionaries among the native

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<sup>51</sup> Imphal is the capital of the present Manipur state.

people.”<sup>52</sup> With this intention of furthering their colonial interests, the British colonisers first reached out to British missionaries to ‘humanize’ and undertake a “mission of civilisation” amongst the ‘wild tribes’ in the Northeast Frontier—with the promise to finance the missionary project and pay salary to whoever might be employed in their capacity as missionaries (Dena 1983). However, the then British missionaries in India declined the offer due to lack of manpower, mission priority amongst other communities and also citing a shortage of finance as another obstacle. So, the proposal was then forwarded to *The American Baptist Missionary Union* in the United States of America. Coincidentally, this proposal was in tune with the aims and interests of American Baptist Missionaries in the continent. As Mepfhü o remarked:

The history of the American Baptist missionaries shows that even before they were invited, they had an interest in establishing their mission in India. When the offer to minister in Assam came, the American missionaries took it up as they already had a vague idea of what the mission endeavour would entail and did not think it would be very difficult to establish their mission in Assam. For the Americans, the offer to minister in the Assam area provided the opportunity not only to reach the hill tribes of Assam, but also access to the Northern Burmans and access to China (Mepfhü-o 2015, 372).

Thus, began the advent of Christian missionaries amongst the Nagas and the diverse communities in the Northeastern region of India.

## **Imagining the Nagas**

In the discourse on Christian proselytization in the Northeastern region of India, Dena opines that the British administration indeed employed Christian missionaries to further their interest. However, he cautions against clubbing the motives of the two parties. He is of the view that underneath the apparent alliance between the Cross and the Flag, there were inner ideological contradictions. That, the missionary movement at its core was

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<sup>52</sup> Vashum, Y. 2016, 7. “Colonialism, Christian Mission and Indigenous: An Examination from Asian Indigenous,” *Biblical Studies.org.uk*. Accessed August 14, 2016. [http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jcta/07-03\\_vashum.pdf](http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jcta/07-03_vashum.pdf). In this paper, he suggests that the analytical study of the connections between the colonial project and missionaries is crucial in problematizing the theological context of the Asian people vis-à-vis the influences of colonization and missionization.



motivated by a profound love of Christ and a desire to share that love with others—a sincere “sympathy with the poor and the suffering who were the special objects of the love of Christ” (Dena 1983, 20). On the other hand, the colonial movement was primarily motivated by commercial interest (Dena 1983).

As Dena has opined, it is true that there are differences in the primary motives of Western Christian missionaries and colonial administrators. No doubt, many of the missionaries sincerely endeavored for the welfare of the Nagas that they were working with, and they did not necessarily agree with the design of the colonial administrators either. “Christian missions and Colonialism were two movements opposite to each other fundamentally. They were two distinct institutionalized entities drawing their inspirations from opposed conceptual extremes” (Dena 1983, 23). However, one cannot ignore the Western cultural ideas and baggage that the Western Christian missionaries came along with, in their enterprise amongst the Nagas. Their views on many of the diverse communities in the region, including the Nagas, were quite similar with that of the British Colonisers—the ‘Other’ who needed to be ‘tamed,’ and to be brought out from ‘darkness’ to ‘civilization.’ Placed on a timeline of civilization, with the modernity of Europe at the Apex, in the view of the Christian missionaries and the British Colonisers, the Nagas were one of the ‘savages’ outside of ‘civilization’ (Lotha 2010). They viewed the cultural and social practices of the Nagas through the lens of binary oppositions—‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized,’ Christians and ‘Pagans’/heathens,’ ‘light’ and ‘darkness.’ As a result, many of the Naga culture and social practices which they deemed as ‘not in congruence’ with Western Christianity were termed as ‘evil,’ and they considered it necessary to terminate such practices. The missionary work thus entailed a construction of not only a new religious self but also a new cultural self which was separate and often in conflict with the existing Naga self (Thomas 2016).

Writing on the historical and ideological background of the American Baptist who sent their missionaries amongst the Nagas, Thomas also wrote: “Structured by certain binaries of good and evil, of God and Satan, of civilized and savage, the new settlers came to regard the various native American tribes as their immediate ‘Other’ in the New World—the other who was the embodiment of all that was unacceptable, and hence, the

other who had to be conquered, disciplined and converted if they were to realize the ‘city’<sup>53</sup> they aspired for” (Thomas 2016, 14). For the American Baptist missionaries, the Nagas resembled the Native Americans, not only in their physical feature but also their social practices and customs. As in the case of the Native Americans, the missionaries required the Nagas to despise, disown and break with their existing socio-cultural values, customs, institutions and refashion themselves as per the civilisational standards set by the white society and religion— “a flight from ‘darkness’ to ‘light’, from ‘savagery’ to ‘civilization’, from ‘headhunting’ to ‘soul hunting’”( Thomas 2016, 28).

Unsurprisingly, many Nagas consider Christianity rather than Colonialism, as the factor which brought about greater change in their society.

## **Changes and Music**

Jan Brouwer in his paper ‘*Cultural Interaction, Christianity and Conversion,*’ raises the question that whether conversion of religion is also a conversion of worldview and perception. To examine this question, he places conversion in the context of cultural interaction which is also an interaction of knowledge systems. He suggested that there is a possibility that inhabitants at the peripheries of world economies, whether perceived or real, might have good reasons to convert to the religions of the inhabitants of the core of world economy. However, in the context of the Nagas, he opines that they contradict such assumptions. So, to interrogate why certain groups convert while others don’t, he deems that it is necessary to consider some fundamental concepts of Christianity—personhood, congregation, and dialogue. In Christianity, as he elaborated, the person is considered to be one Self in one body, and he/she acts in all context based on a single set of principles. While the congregation is considered as one Whole in spite of differences in gender, class, language, etc. The Self is not the same as the Other—it is located outside the Self. Thus, there is a necessity for the individual and the congregation to engage in a dialogue with the Other to make up the Whole that is society (Brouwer 2005).

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<sup>53</sup> “City set on the hill” is a metaphor that John Thomas uses to think how religion mediates political movement. He describes the ‘city’ as an exclusive spatial zone meant for the new Christian converts. As mentioned in *Evangelizing the Nation: Religion and the Formulation of Naga identity*, Routledge, 2016.

Such critical questions are indeed needed to dig deep into the many possible reasons why the Nagas accepted Christianity—what knowledge systems in the Naga society were amiable to Christianity and which were not, or the possibility of other reasons too. These questions can yield significant understandings on the massive conversion of the Nagas to Christianity. Along with that, however, one cannot also ignore the fact that the Western Christian missionaries administrating the processes of conversion and the Nagas who were being proselytized, were at different socio-economic junctures, and with varying knowledge systems. So, there is a need to highlight the lens of the cultural knowledge system through which the Western missionaries molded the new Naga Christian Self. At the same time, one also has to dwell on the agency of the Nagas in imbibing the Western cultural system—which consequently impacted their musicking.

**(i) A New Self**

For the Nagas, religion permeated their entire way of life. Life experienced in its entirety was religious—it was a way of life. Therefore, conversion to a new faith entailed a negotiation and redefinition of one's social and cultural life. In this vulnerable position of the Nagas, the Western missionaries saw the Nagas and their culture through the lens of binary oppositions—‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized.’ They deemed that ‘civilizing’ the Nagas would help them better grasp and embrace Christianity. In this effort, they decided which elements of Naga culture and customs were ‘evil’—an obstacle to ‘civilization’ and ‘incongruent’ with Western Christianity (Thong 2011). Moreover, as per the cultural values of the Western missionaries, being a Christian entailed a Western Christian way of life. Their notion of Christian practice was aligned with the Western way of living. Concomitantly, the Western missionaries undertook the molding of the Naga converts into a new Christian self, imbibing a new moral body and consciousness—a way of ‘being’ which stood in opposition with the existing Naga self and his fellow brethren who chose not to accept the new religion and way of life. The missionaries advocated the new Naga Christian concerts to show their non-Christian neighbors, the superiority of their new way of life not merely by professing and spreading the gospel, but also through a marked differentiation from the non-Christians in their lifestyle choices (akin to the lifestyle of the missionaries) (Mepfhü-o 2016).

The construction of this new Naga self was initiated and maintained through institutions such as Church, Schools—and everyday practices of Bible studies, itinerant preaching tours, worship services and medical work, etc. These institutions and practices promoted, as well as disciplined the people into “the tenor and rhythm of a new religious consciousness, knowledge and lifestyle; and new notion of time, space, body and aesthetics” (Thomas 2016, 29).

In these processes of construction of this new self, the Western missionaries also considered anything that was not according to their standards of Christianity as ‘anti’ (Copley 1997). Consequently, prohibiting the participation of the new converts in many of their indigenous festivals and secession from many of the Nagas’ customs and practices: participation in the feast of merit; drinking *Khor*;<sup>54</sup> taking part in their funeral rites; participation in their youth dormitories, etc.—which as a collateral meant withdrawal from many of the Nagas social and religious activities. This, in turn, led to less engagement with their traditional musical practices, which was a part of such socializing, rituals and merriment.

Additionally, for the missionaries, the mark of being a Christian needed an outward manifestation of their Self—in attire, in their songs and their customs. But with their biased Western cultural perceptions, they looked upon the traditional songs and dances which were indispensable to the well-being and social life of the Nagas (Hao-Tangkhus), as vehicles of ‘demon’ worship and trafficking with evil spirits (Thong 2016). For them, the music of the Nagas (Hao-Tangkhus) were a manifestation of their ‘heathenism,’ ‘idolatry’ and ‘lasciviousness’—and it was therefore antagonistic to their ‘true faith.’ As such, the new Naga converts were discouraged from engaging and expressing in their traditional music.

Inevitably, all these prohibitions took a heavy toll on the Nagas musical practices. As the songs and dances of the Nagas were specific to a particular occasion or festival, the end of celebration of festivals termed as ‘anti-Christian’ marked the end of the songs that were associated with those festivals. Amongst the Hao-Tangkhus, the impact of such prohibition was most conspicuous with the end of *Thisham Phanit*, an indigenous Hao-

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<sup>54</sup> *Khor* is an indigenous Hao-Tangkhus alcoholic drink which was drunk not only at times of festivals but also as a nutritional supplement in their everyday life.

Tangkhul festival which was commemorated to bid farewell to the death's soul in a year.<sup>55</sup> In the celebration of Thisham, many *Kathi laa/ Thisham laa* (death songs) were composed and sung for the dead persons in the village. These songs had to be appropriate for the particular deceased person who is being sent off to *Kazeiram*,<sup>56</sup> the land of the death. None of these songs could be sung out of the context of the rites of this festival, as it was believed that if sung out of the context of this occasion, misfortune or death will incur on one's own family. So, with the decease of the festival, all the songs associated with it ceased too (Ngakang 2014).

Furthermore, in the missionary worldview, Christianity and Civilisation were both equated as two aspects of the gift of God. This worldview permeated their understanding of Christian music, and therefore they considered Western music as Christian music (Ngakang 2014). Concomitantly, in their understanding of the 'appropriate music' to worship the Christian God, the traditional music of the Hao-Tangkhuls had no place—it was relegated as a music of the 'primitive,' and was considered sacrilegious. Coupled with this notion of Hao-Tangkhul music as an 'inappropriate' for Christian worship, the missionaries were also apprehensive of the newly converts returning to their native faith if they continue singing their traditional songs (Ngakang 2014). So, the missionaries deemed it necessary to replace the Hao-Tangkhul traditional music with Western Christian hymns to worship their new god (Thong 2016). Thus, began the introduction of Western music in the form of *hymns* amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls—in their itinerant preaching tours, churches, and the mission schools.

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<sup>55</sup> In the pre-Christian days, the Hao-Tangkhuls believed that even after death, the soul of a human still lingers amongst the living until they are send off with elaborate rituals to *Kazeiram* (land of the death), in *Thisham Phanit*. This festival which is usually celebrated around December-January also marks the end of a year for the Hao-Tangkhuls.

<sup>56</sup> According to the aged belief of the Hao-Tangkhuls (in the past), *Kazeiram* was the place where the spirit of a dead person goes to live the afterlife.

## (ii) Decay of Longshim/Morung<sup>57</sup>

Another significant change which had a huge impact on Hao-Tangkhuls' musical practice was the decay of their youth dormitories. In the past, their Longshim played an essential role in affirming and maintaining the cohesive nature of a village. It was in these dormitories that Hao-Tangkhul youths were taught all the essential skills that they needed to live a meaningful life. Here, they were trained in martial skills, pottery making, weaving, and so on. In these dormitories, the youths were also acquainted and nurtured with the narratives and values of their society—their history, culture, songs and dances, their worldview of *community over the individual*. Thus, these dormitories not only nurtured and molded the Hao-Tangkhul youth but it also served as a bridge between the younger generation and the ways of their forefathers-mothers—which they were to carry forward. As Thong beautifully sums up:

The morung was the institution that undergirded transmission of the Naga traditions from generation to generation. It was the place where the past and the future converged in a present space. In other words, it was an institution where the present generation was shown the direction of their future by pointing to and imparting the values of the past (Thong 2014, 96).

But unfortunately, in the sight of the Western Christian missionaries, these youth dormitories were 'heathen institutions'—an 'anti' to a Christian way of life. In their view, these institutions were incongruent with Christian way of living. Hence, they prohibited Christian converts from being a part of the Longshim and in the long run, with the increase in the numbers of Christian converts, there was a gradual decline in the strength of these dormitories. Such measures not only brought division and reduced the strength of the village but more importantly, it cut off the umbilical cords of the Christian converts from their past and the community. Coupled with this, the prohibition on headhunting imposed by the British administration also further led to the decline of Longshim. As Longshim

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<sup>57</sup> Morung is known by many names amongst the various Naga tribes. In Ao it is *Arichu/Ariju*, among the Lothas it is known as *Champho, Dekha Chang* amongst the Semas, *Kichuki* among the Angamis, and *Longshim* amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls (Horam 1992). The nature of the youth dormitory varies amongst the various Naga families but its essential features are the same. Among the Hao-Tangkhuls, the number of Longshim in a village depends on the population and size of a village. The Hao-Tangkhul boys' dormitory is known as *Mayar-Long* and the girls' wing is *Ngala-Long*. The term *Longshim* is a derivation from *Longnao*, which can be roughly translated as group or organization, and *Shim*, meaning House/Home.

served as a guardhouse against inter-village feuds and provided warriors for a village, with the abolition of headhunting, the defense system of a village need not necessarily be as agile as it was—which reduced the significance of Longshim in a village. Eventually, over time, their Longshim eventually ceased (Ngakang 2014).

Consequently, with the decay of Longshim, young Hao-Tangkhul men and women were deprived of a key institution and space where they could make merry, with songs and dances—to develop and hone their social skills, as well as musical skills. Moreover, the decay of this institution led to the detachment of younger generation of Hao-Tangkhuls from the values that they must know in order to understand, perform and maintain their musical culture. As a result, Hao-Tangkhuls who were deprived of Longshim got gradually disengaged with their traditional musical practices, in the long run.

Meanwhile, the void that was created by the decay of Longshim was soon occupied by the new mission schools and Christian religious spaces that the missionaries promoted. In these new spaces, the Hao-Tangkhuls learned new values set by Western missionaries, devoid of the Nagas' customs and values—including their traditional music which was grounded in their values and actualities which were shaped by the conditions of their ancestors' way of life. Gradually, the new Western songs and musical practices introduced by the missionaries slowly replaced their own indigenous music practices.

### **(iii) Mission Schools, New Ways of Life**

As mentioned above, with the decay of Hao-Tangkhul traditional institution and socio-religious practices, Christian mission schools along with the Church soon came to play a huge role in the lives of Hao-Tangkhuls. Schools became one of the sites to construct and perpetuate the (Western) values of the missionaries. As the core intent of the mission schools was to evangelize and constitute a Naga Christian, the Hao-Tangkhuls (mainly children and the youth) were taught how to read and write in order to facilitate the reading of the Bible—to grasp Christianity in their own language. Besides encouraging the reading of Bible, the practice of singing Christian songs was also systematically enforced. Western tonic sol-fa was regularly taught so that the Hao-Tangkhuls could read and sing the hymns that were prepared for them by the missionary. It was a part of the deliberate attempt to nurture and inculcate the practice of Christianity that the missionaries deemed as

appropriate. As Pettigrew noted in his diary, “the books they study aim to inculcate Christian truth. The school is opened daily with singing and prayer. On the Lord’s Day, they come together for singing and to listen to the Gospel story. As soon as the Catechism is printed, they will be more efficiently able to retain in their minds the truths they have learned orally” (Solo & Mahangthei 2006, 16).

Eventually, over the years, the Christian converts and their children who would go to such schools and live in the Christian colonies,<sup>58</sup> internalized the Western form of worship and the songs that they sang. Moreover, in the Westernized form of Christian worship and lifestyle, and the schools where they were taught, no space for their traditional values, songs and dances were allocated—which in the long run resulted not only in the non-transmission of their traditional musical practice but even reduced the significance of their traditional music. Besides, the children of the early converts were also deprived of avenues and occasions to value and learn their traditional music—with the decay of their Longshim and many of their socio-religious practices. In due course, as the number of Christian converts increased and the strength of non-Christian elders begin to fade—there were less and less people—to value, uphold, and enjoy their traditional music.

However, these adoptions of new musical practice and way of life cannot be construed only as a result of the mediations of the Christian missionaries, and the British colonizers. One also has to take into account that agency of the Nagas in this processes of change. It was not just a simple one-way process of exertion and acceptance.<sup>59</sup> As mentioned earlier, the Western Christian missionaries and the Nagas in their encounter were at a varying material juncture and power dynamics. The missionaries came along

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<sup>58</sup> In many of the Hao-Tangkhol villages, the early Christian converts were banished from their ancestral villages. Usually the Christian converts settled some distance away from where the main village is located. Christian colony is a reference to such settlement. In Halang village, *Masorim*, the name one of their *tang* (locality demarcation in the village) has its origin in the first Christian settlement in the village. In its neighbouring village *Phungcham*, the Christian settlement area was known as *Lungkho*. Such narratives are prevalent in many of their villages.

<sup>59</sup> Many a times the discourse on conversion of faith is often argued mainly as a linear process—ignoring the agency of the society accepting the new faith. In the case of the Nagas, acceptance of a new religion can perhaps be discussed on two realms: the metaphysical or rather spiritual realm; and second, the material or physical realm. Since it is not within the scope of this research to investigate thoroughly and understand the profound forces and revelations that entail the phenomenon of being *born again* in Christianity, the narrative is confined to the material realm and related with the agency of the Nagas in imbibing a new faith and lifestyle.



under the rule of the British administration. They were on the side which wielded certain authority and material influence. So, conversion to the faith of the missionaries shouldn't be uncritically considered entirely in terms of a change of faith. The form of Christianity that the Nagas encountered was an offer of not just faith, but it also was associated with a new material world—an alternative lifeworld. This was a time when the intervention of British colonialism in the region was gradually dragging the Nagas into a new system of living: an economy that they had less control of; the authority of their elders getting delegitimized, and an increasing shift of power from their chiefs and elders to external authorities, as well as to the new forms of leaders that the Colonial and Missionary intervention entailed; the unity of their villages being shaken and a new notion of wealth being introduced;<sup>60</sup> increasing mobility of not just the Nagas but also non-Naga traders and troops in their villages, with the construction of motorable roads; outbreak of new diseases (which was unknown in the past, amongst them) with the increase of human movements and its subsequent medical work which challenged traditional Naga healing practices; introduction and circulation of new technologies and commodities; increasing mobility and the formation of semi-urban areas amongst the Nagas, such as Mokokchung, Kohima, Ukhrul, etc.—which opened up new forms of sustenance and opportunities—teachers, traders, translators, etc.—a form of living and mobility which need not be confined to just one's village and resources.

In the context of these significant changes, it is highly plausible that the younger Naga generation must have felt the need to move beyond the existing community norms and structures of their society, and “to explore and experiment with what the new dispensation had to offer” (Thomas 2016:47). Unsurprisingly, the early converts—those who had had a ready hearing for the missionaries, were mainly the youth (Puthenpurakal 1984). Perhaps, it was not just mere coincidence that the first twelve Christian converts amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls were the youths who went to the mission school established

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<sup>60</sup> In the Naga value system, wealth was measured not by how much a person can accumulate but by how much a person has shared his resources with the fellow villagers and the recognition that the person attains for such deeds—symbolically marked through the wearing of certain shawls, monoliths erection and the adornments in a house. Such a deed was carried out in ‘feast of merit.’ But the missionaries delegitimized such festivity, which gradually led to the demeaning of such conception of wealth. Along with that, the introduction of money economy also took a toll on the Nagas' value and notion of wealth.

by Rev. William Pettigrew<sup>61</sup> (Phungyo Baptist Church History, 2002). These new Christian converts<sup>62</sup> did not just convert into a new religion; they also adopted a tangible manifestation of being a Christian—which was attuned with the norms of the Western missionaries. The first outward manifestation was the adoption of Western haircut in place of *Haokuiret*.<sup>63</sup> Later on, it percolated even to clothes, adornments, and their music too. Such outward manifestation of the norms of the missionaries was possibly yielded by the identification of many youths with the ‘way’ of the missionaries—the notion of a new world—an aspiration towards an alternative way of living—and not just as a result of the impositions of the missionaries.

Moreover, as Thomas posits, the propensity of the younger generation to adopt Christianity also had to do with their urge to resist the efforts of Colonial administrators to preserve and objectify their supposed ‘primitivism’ and thereby restrain them from becoming what they perceived to be ‘modern’ (Thomas 2016).

Seen in this light, perhaps the singing of Western hymns in place of their traditional songs, can be read as not simply a practice of worship imposed by the missionaries, but to some extent, we can imagine, on the part of the young Hao-Tangkhuls, an identification with the ‘civilization’ that the Western missionaries seem to represent. As Thomas remarked, “accruing the benefits of ‘modernity’ required that one also familiarize and fashion oneself according to the civilizational standards set by the missionary and his religion” (Thomas 2016, 49).

Nonetheless, it should also be noted that the possibility of an alternative way of living, was not just an opportunity that could be pursued or aspired for, but it was a necessity too. The introduction of Western education, monetary economy and a new political administration in the Hao-Tangkhul hills and its neighborhood (through their

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<sup>61</sup>As mentioned earlier in the beginning of this chapter, Rev. William Pettigrew and his wife Mrs. Alice Pettigrew were the first European missionaries that undertook missionary work amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls. He came to India as part of the *Arthington Mission*. But over the course of time he became a Baptist—which is one of the many Christian denomination. By the time he was amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, he was affiliated with and was sponsored by the *American Baptist Union*.

<sup>62</sup> But it was such that amongst the early converts, some of them couldn’t live up to the standard of ‘Christian way of life’, so Pettigrew chose only seven of them to carry forward the Christian life (Phungyo Baptist Church History, 2002).

<sup>63</sup> Haokuiret is an indigenous haircut of the Hao-Tangkhuls. Men completely shave off the hair on both sides of the head leaving a crescent top and a pony tail, at times.

encounter with Western missionaries and British administration), had dragged them into a new world system in which they couldn't continue living independently as they were before. Unlike their self-sustaining agricultural economy, new modes of technology and commodities were introduced—for which they were dependent on the market economy. Such dependency necessitated the need for monetary wealth to access these new resources. In addition, the social, economic and political changes in the region, as well as the world, had also exposed the Hao-Tangkhuls to new actualities, where it became necessary to pursue a living beyond the confines of their villages. Faced with these changing conditions of their milieu, Hao-Tangkhuls began moving out of their native villages and the adopted new ways of living, besides their agricultural life.<sup>64</sup>

Consequently, these new actualities deeply impacted the Hao-Tangkhul musical practices. As their musicking was occasioned by the way of life entailed by an agricultural economy and village republic political system, the milieu to engage in their traditional practice was steadily diminished—in their new context—as the pace of their living and the new spaces they inhabit didn't provide the necessary environment for their traditional music to flourish. Moreover, with their changing socio-economic reality, the need for certain type of songs went out of relevance as the appropriate occasion to sing those songs diminished. As the retention of these songs was reliant on memory, without continued performance, the existing songs were gradually not retained in their musical repertoire, neither were such type of new songs composed. Amongst these faded songs, one of the earliest and most conspicuous genres of songs which withered away was their *War songs*. In the past, the headhunting practice and the warfare amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls used to inspire beautiful songs and stimulate artistic production. But in their new changed context, as such practices ceased with the ban imposed by the British Colonial rulers, and as a result of a change of faith (Christianity), *War* and *Glorification* songs were no longer inspired. No new songs were no longer composed, and over time even most of the existing songs were eventually forgotten—as in their changed context, the space, and occasion to continue singing these songs diminished (Ngakang 2014).

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<sup>64</sup> From their schools, new profession such as teachers and preachers were generated, the new economy also needed traders, laborers, etc. The Hao-Tangkhuls were also inducted as porters, translators and soldiers of British Labor Corp during the two World wars.

#### (iv) Technologies of Mediation

The impact of Western missionaries on the musicking of the Nagas was not limited to their negative influence on their traditional music; they were also the first agents that exposed the Nagas to a form of musical practice that altered the ontology of their musicking itself. In the process of proselytizing amongst them, Western Christian missionaries not only introduced Western music (mainly Hymns), but they were also the first individuals who exposed the Nagas to audio technology, where recorded sound could be played back without the physical presence of the performing human.

Amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, in order to attract their attention, Pettigrew in his itinerant preaching tours made use of technologies such as Magic lantern, Bible roll, and the Gramophone. He would translate the meaning of the records—‘Glory Song,’ ‘Tell mother I’ll be there’—for the ‘benefit’ of the Hao-Tangkhuls (Solo & Mahangthei 2006). The employment of these technologies turned preaching into a spectacle, initiating an effective experience that was worth consuming. These technologies signified the new religion and culture of the missionaries. Through the Bible rolls and Magic lantern, the narratives of Christ turned into a visible entity. Similarly, through the gramophone and musical instruments that the missionaries brought, the sound of the new religion came to be popularized. The songs that were played through it became the “legitimate sounds of Christianity” (Thomas 2016).

It is very likely that these new technologies, especially the exposure to the gramophone (in the context of music) would have been a powerful, if not a reflexive experience. Musicking amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls until then was always in the *lived moment*. It was entirely dependent on the physical presence of the musicking humans, and it was always a live performance and experience. But the gramophone player defied this nature of their musicking—as not only the physical presence of the musicking person is erased but even the moment of that performance itself is dislocated in another time and space. At that point in time, in the lived reality of the Hao-Tangkhuls, the realm of the living and that of the death and the spirits were always co-existent—even the death could inspire and teach songs in their dreams, but the *site* and *agency* of their musicking was always a human embodied music, with the physical presence of a human—within the real time of the performance. Seen from such perspective, the exposure to the gramophone must

have been much more than an act of listening—perhaps, it would have been a revelation in a sense—an other-worldly experience. If not to the extent of fetishization, but at least, the gramophone would have evoked a magical aura, and listening to it must have been an unsettling experience. The experience of being exposed to such disembodied sounds must have to some extent been similar to what music critics wrote on the early experiences of Americans’ listening to the Phonograph (the predecessor of gramophone): they “cannot bear to hear a remarkably life-like human voice issuing from a box. They desire the physical presence. For want of it, the gramophone distresses them” (Katz 2012, 16).

Another technology that the missionaries introduced was the art of writing. With the intent of making the Hao-Tangkhuls read the Bible and sing hymns in their own language, Pettigrew penned the language of Hunphun, the village where he set up his first mission station. It was transcribed in Roman script, with the addition of  $\bar{a}$  and  $\underline{a}$  to accommodate the varying tones in Hao-Tangkhul languages.<sup>65</sup> This led to the adoption of the language of Hunphun amongst all the Christian converts (in their religious practice), irrespective of village—in the long run yielding a *lingua franca* amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls. Additionally, the adoption of a standard Bible and Hymnbook<sup>66</sup> played a huge role in unifying and strengthening the Hao-Tangkhuls as a community. As Shimreiwung asserted, “The social and political significance of every Christian Tangkhul village singing from one standard *Hymnal*, studying the same textbook in Tangkhul language, and reciting from the same *Gospel*, has far more reaching impact on the consolidation of Tangkhuls as one single tribe than what the Missionaries were intending to do” (Shimreiwung 2014, 158).

Furthermore, the establishment of one standard Hymnbook (and Bible) engendered an intriguing phenomenon amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls. (In the past) In their Christian religious practice, they began to sing in one common language even as they sang their traditional songs in their various distinct languages (of their numerous villages). (Except for the villagers of Hunphun) So, Hao-Tangkhuls were singing in specific demarcated language in the Church while using another language in their traditional songs. Further,

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<sup>65</sup> Each Hao-Tangkhul village has their own language which were intelligible amongst the neighboring villages, while with villages located at a far distance, their languages were not intelligible to each other.

<sup>66</sup> Hymnbook is a collection of Christian hymns, in the form of a compiled book. The first edition of Hymnbook in Hao-Tangkhul language, titled as *Jesuwui Lā* was printed in 1907. But as of today, they have produced several other refined hymnbook, and now it is known as *Khokharum Laa* (Worship songs).

within a village itself, the Christian converts were singing Western hymns in (Hunphun) Hao-Tangkhul language, while the rest were singing their traditional songs in the native language of the village. So, it was a clear demarcation of language, as well as musical style, in their midst—Western hymns in Hao-Tangkhul language (as well as English) for the Christians, while traditional music in their numerous languages, for the non-Christians (primarily), and in a small measure even amongst the new Christian converts.

Besides this delineation of language and musical style, the introduction of hymns/Hymnbook in the musicking of the Hao-Tangkhuls was also a foundational alteration in the learning (memorization) and oralization of their songs. As an oral society, their songs were learned entirely through hearing—words as such had no visual presence—they were only sounds (Ong 2002). As such, words and songs were never separated from the living present; they alone never existed without a performing or oralizing human being. Wherefore, the retention of their songs was dependent on their constant use of the song and on the collective memory of the community—usually the older folks in the village. Such dependency on human memory had consequently molded their songs with a flexible personality—the key themes and tunes being the same, but the placement, addition or subtraction of words and sentences being variable. Therefore, a song sung a few years or decades ago might not necessarily be sung verbatim in the present.<sup>67</sup> But with the introduction of writing, singing of hymns unlike their traditional songs was not necessarily always sung by memory but it also involved a reference to a written text. The hymns that they sang came in a fixed written format—the words as well as the tonic sol-fa of the songs at times. So unlike their traditional songs, now there was an element of fixity in these songs. Additionally, the entirely aural character of their musicking now had the presence of a visual aid. This entailed a new way of learning songs—not just by hearing but also seeing (reading).

However, in spite of these new changes in their musicking, simultaneously, the aural character of their traditional musical practices was in vogue too. Their traditional music was not transcribed into the Western tonic sol-fa format as it was with the hymns.

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<sup>67</sup> Even today *Miwurlung laa* (Hao-Tangkhul origin song) of varying length are noted amongst the writings of many Hao-Tangkhul writers. See T.Luikham, *Wung-Tangkhul Okthot Mayonza*, 2013: 189; Ringkahao Horam, *The Tangkhul Folk Poetry: Haolaa in song*, 2013:18; Reisang Vashum, *Encountering Modernity: situating the Tangkhul Nagas in Perspective*, 2014: 46, etc.

Most often, they were also sung without the aid of a text. Further, till the early twentieth century, most of the Hao-Tangkhuls hadn't learned to read. So, in spite of the presence of written hymns, many were still singing without a visual aid. Coupled with that, the adoption of hymns up to this time was limited, as many of the Hao-Tangkhuls were still non-Christians who were engaging only with their traditional musical practices.

But the adoption of this new mode of musical practice and musical style i.e. Hymns, increased after each World War—as the population of Hao-Tangkhul Christians increased. As some of the old folks from the community would say, “it was after the Japan Rai (war) that the flame of Christianity caught on, village after village.”

#### **(v) Impact of the Two World Wars**

The First and Second World War was a churning experience for the Hao-Tangkhuls. In the First World War, hundreds of them were shipped out of their land to fight another man's war, across the sea.<sup>68</sup> While, in the Second World War, the fight was brought right into their homes. The measure of the destruction of human wealth, natural resources and the loss of life, was on a scale that their ages of war had never entailed. It was a war of magnitude they had never experienced. Inevitably, the resultant impact of these Wars was felt in many aspects of their lives, especially in the context of their faith.

With the First World War, the number of Hao-Tangkhul Christian converts began steadily increasing. In this change, the Hao-Tangkhuls who went to France as a part of the British Labour Corps played a catalyzing role. What many of them have heard about the actualities of the world (from the mouth of the Western missionaries)—the Christian lives that were lived elsewhere by multitudes of communities across the sea could now be measured from the narratives of their own kinsmen who went to the First World War. On hearing the testimonies<sup>69</sup> of these returnees, who confirmed what the Western missionaries preached, young Hao-Tangkhul men and women began earnestly listening to the message

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<sup>68</sup> As a part of the British Labour Corps, 1200 Hao-Tangkhuls were shipped to France ( Ngakang, 2017).As mentioned in the first chapter, some of the returnee from this journey, composed their experiences of this journey (war) in the form of songs—in their traditional musical style.

<sup>69</sup> Remarks of the First World War returnees to William Pettigrew: “We had little faith in your stories of lands across sea and oceans, people with beings who believed in the Christ you preached to us, but we have seen with our own eyes the emblem of the cross over thousands of graves on the battle fields, and the beautiful gravestones in the cemeteries of France” (as quoted in Ngakang 2017).

of the Cross—resulting in many conversion to Christian faith (Ngakang 2017). Yet, the no. of Christian converts was still not massive. But after the end of the Second World War or Japan Rai, as many elderly Hao-Tangkhul refer to,<sup>70</sup> manifold conversion of the Hao-Tangkhuls began.<sup>71</sup>

The aftermath of the Second World War was a period of regrouping and rebuilding their villages—as many of them fled from their homes and took refuge in their fields and forest during the war. As noted in Phungyo Baptist Church History, “even though the Japanese occupation was short, the Hao-Tangkhuls faced immense hardships as our homes were burnt to the ground—we fled hither and thither in our fields and the forests. Yet, after the war, we returned and rebuild our lives again merrily as it was in the yore.”<sup>72</sup> The psychological impact of these actualities might to some degree have had influenced their worldviews, making them more susceptible to the message of Christianity—which promised redemption and saving from the condemnation of hell, a saving from their misery. But, aside the possible impact of these wars on their faith, it is known that there was a manifold increase in the Christian population amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls after the War. This increasing population of Christians meant the adoption of Western music on a bigger scale and the declining strength of Hao-Tangkhuls who practiced their traditional music. The more the number of Christians, meant more hymns were sung in the hills—correspondingly, fewer people to sing their traditional songs.

Additionally, these Wars also blew new music into their hills. Prior to the Second World War or better known as Japan Rai (War) and Rairei (Big War), there were only a few Western missionaries and administrators who accessed the Hao-Tangkhul Hills. But with the beginning of the Second World War, there was a huge influx of Japanese armies as well as British armies in their hills. With the soldiers also came new styles of music. Western country-folk songs such as “You are my sunshine,” “She’ll Be Coming Round the

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<sup>70</sup> Due to a lack of statistics on the no. of Christian converts in all the Hao-Tangkhul villages right after the Second World War, it is hard to ascertain the exact figures and scale of Christian conversion. But in the course of my field work, many elderly Hao-Tangkhuls opined that they witnessed a manifold increased in the no. of Christian converts after the Second World War.

<sup>71</sup> One has to dig much deeper to elucidate the effect of these Wars on the faith of the Hao-Tangkhuls. But within the scope of this research one will have to confine to pointing out that after the War, the number of conversion increased on a large scale.

<sup>72</sup> This quote is the researcher’s translation of the original writing in Hao-Tangkhul language. See *Phungyo Baptist Church History*, 2002:50.



Mountain” and “Oh My Darling, Clementine” began to resound in their hills. Some of these songs were heard over the gramophones and some through the singing of the soldiers. As such, besides the hymns, another style of Western music which is not necessarily within the bound of their religious practice, came into being.

From here on, over the years, new sound technologies and various musical influences from across the rivers and oceans increasingly kept pouring into their hills. At the same time, the increasing mobility of the Hao-Tangkhuls to move beyond their homeland also led to further cultural exposure and exchanges of musical influence. Thus, the soundscape and the way of musicking in their hills steadily kept on moving further beyond their traditional mode of musicking—to a musical practice where foreign musical sounds and recorded sounds became increasingly common—a natural part of their transformed musicking.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Hindi Film Songs, Church, and the Guitar**

In the preceding chapters, I have detailed the early musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls and traced the changes that came about in their encounters with Christianity and Colonialism. This chapter examines further some of the key aspects of their musicking post the independence of India—the kind of musicking culture that continued and the new musical styles that were adopted over the course of time. In doing so, the narrative will locate Hao-Tangkhul musical practices within the larger discourses on music and media within India, especially the early succeeding decades post Indian independence.<sup>73</sup> The prime focus will be on the extent of Hindi film songs' popularity in their hills—how it came about and what are its influences on Hao-Tangkhul music culture.

This chapter further proceeds to detail the contemporary musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls in their religious domain, especially the significance of hymns in their worship and its permeation in other aspects of their life, as well as the influences of musicking in the church on their youth. In the final section, the narrative moves on to the guitar culture of the Hao-Tangkhuls—the historical trajectory of its initial introduction amongst them, and its eventual ubiquitous presence in their music culture, as well as in their various socializations.

In this chapter, attempts have been made to take into account the complex interplay of media, technology, migration, and the social and musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls.

#### **Hindi Film Songs**

The independence of the Indian state ushered a new historical turn in the political reality of the Nagas. These were the times when it was not just the leaders of India who were grappling with the task of building a new-born nation—the Nagas were also strongly asserting their sovereignty and aspiring a nation of their own. They did not picture

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<sup>73</sup> Such an account will also aid in contextualizing the present actualities of the Nagas in India.

themselves within the India State and rather aspired to be independent as they were in the past—before their subjugation by the British Colonial power. But this aspiration of the Nagas did not go down well with the Indian State, then under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. Consequently, the conflict that emerged with the different aspirations of the Nagas and the Indian State became what is now considered by some political observers, as one of the world’s “oldest continuing armed conflict” and the “least known” (Baruah 2003).<sup>74</sup>

Within such context, the leaders of the post-colonial Indian State had the task of enabling the ‘national integration’ of the many nationalities and regions in the country (the Nagas included). In this effort, one of the approaches that the State adopted, involved the appropriation of broadcasting media—through which specific programs and values were promoted—to foster “cultural nationalism.” With this “nationalist objective,” centralized control of radio and television was legitimized. The rationale being that, “cultural nationalism could serve as a potent force for nation building” (Farmer 2002, 257).

In the context of the Nagas, besides the military approach and political dialogues in the later years, this appropriation of broadcasting media was an important marker of the expansion of a new wave of ideology and cultural values in their hills. The independence of India heralded not only a new political status of the Nagas being in the Indian state but also the introduction of new musical styles and culture, over the years. As with the Christian missionaries, schools became the first public spaces to inculcate the music and language of another culture. The first Hindi songs that the Hao-Tangkhuls were exposed to, was “Jana Gana Mana” and “Vande Mataram”—the national anthem and national song of India, respectively. It was a mandatory routine for students to sing these songs every day in the school assemblies, as well as to present them during visits from the State officials.<sup>75</sup> Interestingly, as some of the elderly Hao-Tangkhuls narrated, gramophones were distributed in State schools so that the teachers and students could learn these songs. However, for the larger Hao-Tangkhul community, it was through radio broadcasting that

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<sup>74</sup> In 1951, the Nagas led by Naga National Council conducted a Plebiscite in Kohima—where 99.9% voted to be independent and not to join India. Till date, the Nagas, through their representatives have signed several accords and ceasefire agreements with the Govt. of India to bring about a peaceful solution to the continuing conflict. On August 3, 2015, the incumbent Govt. of India under the leadership of Narendra Modi signed a *Naga Framework Agreement* with NSCN (IM), one the most influential group representing the Nagas. The details are still being negotiated between the two parties and are yet to be made public.

<sup>75</sup> This ritualized practice of singing national anthem and national song in schools is still carried forward till date, if not as rigorous as it was in the past.

the State could play a much more influential role in popularizing a new musicking culture in their hills—Hindi film songs.

As mentioned earlier, in the early years of post-colonial India, broadcasting media—especially radio, was judiciously employed by the State to create and promote a ‘national’ culture in the country.<sup>76</sup> Set with this task of “cultural nationalism,” *All India Radio* or *Akashvani*,<sup>77</sup> in its initial days, promoted mainly Hindustani classical music and other folk music to a certain extent. As Sen remarked, “Part of its (AIR) self-proclaimed mission was to create a healthier and ‘higher’ national culture by exposing the masses to the treasures of the country’s cultural heritage” (Sen 2008, 90). Film music till then was not considered appropriate, and so it was banned from broadcasting in *Akashvani*. But as the listening public “defected” to *Radio Ceylon*,<sup>78</sup> whose broadcasting policy was more in tune with consumer demand, the then Indian government “bowed down to popular taste” and soon began broadcasting Hindi film songs (Sen 2008). So, in 1957 *Vividh Bharati* was inaugurated as a “light alternative national service” of All India Radio (Baruah 1983)—“to disseminate popular music in India” (Sircar 2015). Thus, in the programming of this new radio channel, i.e. *Vividh Bharati*, a major chunk of broadcasting time was allotted to commercial Hindi film songs. As per the *Report of the Working Group on Autonomy for Akashvani & Doordarshan*, 1978, ninety percent of *Vividh Bharati* channel’s broadcast comprised of music—out of which, classical music comprised 16 percent, folk and regional music 10 percent, devotional and patriotic music 4 percent, and the lion share of 60 percent was devoted to Hindi film music.

Though not entirely as a result of this radio programming, but to some extent, the influence of such programming cannot be ruled out in popularizing Hindi film songs amongst the older generation of Hao-Tangkhuls.<sup>79</sup> Even though a radio set was not owned by majority of the Hao-Tangkhuls, in the early years of post-colonial India, at least a single or few radio sets were often found in a village—owned sometimes by few well-off

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<sup>76</sup> The large “illiterate population” in the country made radio the most obvious medium for this project (Sen 2008).

<sup>77</sup> *All India Radio* or *Akashvani* is the national public broadcaster of India.

<sup>78</sup> *Radio Ceylon* can be traced to its predecessor, *Colombo Radio*, which was launched on December 16, 1925, in Sri Lanka. It is considered to be the first ever radio station in Asia and the second oldest in the world (Rosayro 2017).

<sup>79</sup> The present youth source their music from many other sources and technologies.

villagers, and often with the chief of the village. As some elderly Hao-Tangkhuls narrated, radio sets were provided by the State in many of their villages—to disseminate information and news. So, initially, radio was more of a news device rather than a medium or means for listening to music. But over the years, radio was also adopted as a technology/device and a medium for the purpose of listening to music.

Perhaps, these changes can be roughly dated from late 1960s onwards—with the inauguration of AIR Imphal, on August 15, 1963. Though news broadcasting in Hao-Tangkhul language had begun much earlier (through AIR Guwahati), it was with the inception of AIR Imphal, that the broadcasting of music in Hao-Tangkhul language gained popularity. Radio station became a new platform for Hao-Tangkhul musicians to perform, and also be heard in many of their villages, at a single time. Unlike in the past, now they could listen to a musical performance together, in real time, in their own villages (Anderson 1983).<sup>80</sup> It was music from “Oko wui laa”—songs of the box<sup>81</sup> (Shimreiwung 2009). Further, the possibility of requesting and dedicating songs amongst themselves, also soon led to an increase in Hao-Tangkhuls tuning into radio—to enjoy music. This was not confined to listening to their own songs but even Western music and commercial Hindi film songs. This was also the phase when AIR had already begun allotting a prominent share to Hindi film music, in its daily broadcastings. Moreover, through traveling theaters<sup>82</sup> and the video parlors that were run in Ukhrul, Kamjong, Phungyar;<sup>83</sup> and the cinema halls that the Hao-Tangkhuls accessed on their visits to Imphal, Guwahati, and Shillong, etc.—many of them steadily got acquainted with Hindi film songs. Alexander Langyza, now a school inspector in Manipur, recounted his early experience with Hindi film songs as such:

In the late 1960s, as a young boy, festivals and radio was the main source of music. It was through radio and also the films which I watched in movie theaters that I came to learn of Hindi film songs, such as “Mere Sapnon Ki Rani,” “Roop Tera Mastana” (*Aradhna*, 1969), and “Lakhon Hain Yahan Dilwale” (*Kismet* 1968).

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<sup>80</sup> As Anderson in ‘Imagined Communities’ (1983) pointed out, the simultaneity of time afforded by print-capitalism made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others in profound ways. Similarly, one can conjecture that the possibility of listening to Hao-Tangkhul radio program in a single time, across their hills, to some extent strengthened the conception of their communion amongst themselves.

<sup>81</sup> Box is a term used by old Hao-Tangkhul folks as a reference to radio and later, for television as well.

<sup>82</sup> Which were organized by traders from Imphal, especially on festive occasions.

<sup>83</sup> Ukhrul town is the administrative headquarter of Ukhrul District, and also has the largest population of Hao-Tangkhuls. Phungyar and Kamjong are subdivisions in Ukhrul District.

Similarly, Chiphang, a native of Hunphun village narrated that, as a young man in the late 1960s and early 1970s, he recalls humming the songs of Mohammad Rafi and Lata Mangeshkar, whose films songs he was exposed to, through radio and cinema theater. Interestingly, he further remarked that, most often, these songs were sung without really understanding the meaning of the songs. As he puts it, “Hindiva phab mata manei, laawui akhon kasa manei” (I didn’t understand the Hindi words, it was only an imitation of the tunes).<sup>84</sup>

However, this does not mean that prior to 1960s, there was no Hindi film songs in the Hao-Tangkhul hills. As Awo Machung, an octogenarian Hao-Tangkhul narrated, even in the 1950s quite a few youth were already singing popular Hindi film songs of Ashok Kumar<sup>85</sup>—in their local social gatherings and friends get-togethers. But at this point in time, Hindi film songs were primarily heard through “oral transmissions as people learned and reproduced them in new contexts after hearing them at the cinema” (Morcom 2008, 64)—and at times, through the gramophones that were hired in their festive occasions.<sup>86</sup> Proliferation of radio sets as well as Hao-Tangkhuls (mainly youth) accessing movie theaters/parlors began much later in the 1960s-70s. By 1980s, Hindi film songs also became accessible through Television programs like *Chitrahaar*, later on, *Rangoli*, as well as through the movies televised by *Doordarshan*.<sup>87</sup> On top of that, with the “Cassette revolution” as Manuel termed (Manuel 1993), Hindi film music was by then disseminated through cassettes.

Even though a large majority of the Hao-Tangkhuls could not afford to access music through these tapes/cassettes, there were sections in their society who were privy to such technology. Besides, even without owning such tapes, one could listen to music through the cassette players of friends and acquaintances.<sup>88</sup> Consequently, with increasing exposure, Hindi film songs began to be more regularly performed in their school programs

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<sup>84</sup> Similar accounts of exposure to Hindi film songs through radio and movie theatres were shared by many.

<sup>85</sup> In my interviews, many elderly Hao-Tangkhuls mainly recall either the name of the film or the actors in the film, but not the title of the songs that they have heard.

<sup>86</sup> Most of the gramophones and the sound systems employed in these occasions were hired from shops in Imphal. Individually owning of such equipment was rare—even as a village they rarely owned these audio systems, in the past.

<sup>87</sup> Doordarshan is an autonomous public service broadcaster founded by the Government of India, which is owned by the Broadcasting Ministry of India and is one of two divisions of *Prasar Bharati*.

<sup>88</sup> Some of the Hao-Tangkhuls narrated that the lyrics of Hindi film songs were also sold in the form of small books.

like ‘Glory day,’ ‘Parliament Day,’ ‘Teachers’ Day,’ as well as in their social gatherings and festive occasions. By late 1980s and 90s, commercial Hindi films and their songs had become popular to such an extent that, Hao-Tangkhuls started producing music videos and films, imitating the cinematic grammars of Hindi films or Bollywood, as rechristened lately (Roy 2010)—the film narratives interspersed with choreographed music scenes of men and women dancing by the river, hills, etc.<sup>89</sup> To name a few: *Khipawui Khayon*, *Tipkhawon*, *Kateoa Kaphungli Kahakka Tuishok*, *Situi Tungli kapikahai Diary*, and *Ramcho Ramrin*, etc. Like in Bollywood films, songs played a major role in the popularity of these films. Songs from the films of these era, such as “Ngachei Haira,” “Thingthingwui Lungli,” “ABC Tamchithei,” “Zatthuihao Iwui Leikashi Khuiphungda,” etc., are still fondly sung till date.

Thus, over the course of time, commercial Hindi film songs or Bollywood music with their melodic and catchy tunes, got gradually became a part of the musicking culture of many Hao-Tangkhuls,<sup>90</sup> if not all. However, this was not necessarily always in the form of regularly listening to, and singing Hindi film songs, rather, it was more of an influence of commercial Hindi filmy culture—accommodating Hindi films and songs in their social and musical practices. In their musical performances in schools and festive occasions, it was music to accompany their dances<sup>91</sup> and dramas; in their social gatherings it was one of the many songs that they sang and listened to; in their nascent film and music productions, commercial Hindi films and their choreographed songs were a model they could adopt within their own context and capacity. View from such contexts, Hindi films songs was not just another musical style(s) they could listen to and sing along with; it was a part of a new social and cultural experiences that came along in their encounter with modernity. And behind this phenomenon, one can observe the confounding intersections of political maneuverings, technological influences, commercial motives, cultural flows, as well as the historical circumstance of the Nagas being in the Indian State.

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<sup>89</sup> The adoption of choreographed songs was mainly confined to the choreography of the lead actors. The elaborate visual settings and group performances in commercial Hindi films are absent—as these were small budget films where even the crew members and actors were meagerly paid.

<sup>90</sup> Exposure to Hindi film songs seem to be confined more to those Hao-Tangkhuls who had more access to semi-urban and urban places, like Ukhrul town, Imphal, Guwahati, etc.

<sup>91</sup> Even in the 1990s, the researcher himself recalls many students aping Madhuri Dixit’s dance moves in “Ek Do Deen,” from the film *Tezaab* (1988).

Here, I mention the historical circumstance of the Nagas, as it throws up intriguing thoughts to ponder upon. The question arises as to whether the Nagas in Myanmar will be as culturised with Hindi film songs, as their brethren are, in India? Also, in the backdrop of an aspiring sovereign Nagalim, how had commercial Hindi films which are easily identified by many with India, been able to make such an influence? Does this phenomenon say more about the nature of the musicking culture of the Hao-Tangkhuls; the interventions of the State; or technological influences and the commercial push of Hindi films; the nature of Hindi film songs; or does it have to do with the confounding nature of music itself? Moreover, with the increasing technological possibility of accessing varieties of musical styles, it is also worth pondering how much time or space are the younger Hao-Tangkhuls giving to Hindi film music—in their everyday musicking. These are questions that needs further probing to better understand the context of Hindi film songs amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, but within the limited scope of this dissertation, I'll narrow my remarks on few of the issues that have been raised above.

In spite of the strong aspiration for a sovereign Nagalim and its consequent resistance to the Indian State, amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, when it comes to music, there seems to be no animosity or ban on music or popular culture which can be identified with India. In fact, discourses of Naga sovereignty amongst the civilians, harps on struggle with the State and military but not people. As such, discourses on institutional or societal restrictions and resistance to Hindi film songs are absent.<sup>92</sup> Commercial Hindi films and songs were rather fondly remembered by many of the older generation of Hao-Tangkhuls, especially those who are in their 50s and above. Conversation on these films were enthused with casual remarks of their younger selves when they used to visit cinema theaters—sporting long hairs, dressed in their bellbottom pants, big-collared shirts, polka-dot frocks, and so on. The narrative edges on convivial associations of commercial Hindi films with emerging possibilities of recreation and lifestyles that were mediated in their lives through modern technologies—technologies as not just science and machines; but as social and organizational technologies (Castell 1993).

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<sup>92</sup> Even around the year 2000 when there was a ban on Hindi films in Manipur state by Revolutionary *People's Front*, a valley based Meitei insurgent groups, in the Hao-Tangkhul hills no such ban was encouraged nor practiced.



Further, commercial Hindi films songs' entry in the Hao-Tangkhul hills began around mid-twentieth century with the seductive awe and wonder of successive technologies—from gramophone to radio, then cassettes, television and so on. Latest technology had been successfully adopted by Bombay Hindi film industry and consequently “the use of electric guitars, synthesizers and advanced sound-recording equipment had altered the sound of Hindi film music” (Skillman 1986, 142) as a modern “hybrid” sound—emanating not only an advancement in audio quality but also several musical styles from around the world. Even by 1960s and 70s, in Hindi film music, borrowing of musical styles ranging from jazz, Latin-American dances, rock-and-roll, Hawaiian “hapa-haole” songs, Western classical, cabaret, and disco were already discernible (Skillman 1986). In fact, this eclectic nature became one of the defining characteristic features of Hindi film songs (Arnold 1988). As Skillman posits, Hindi “Film songs is India's bridge between the traditional and the rapidly developing modern society” (Skillman 1986, 143).

As such, the Hao-Tangkhuls did not identify Hindi films and their songs with the State and didn't view it as necessitating a societal or organizational resistance, or as posing an existential threat to their culture. Neither was Hindi film songs associated as a part of their ‘national’ culture—an “imaginary of the nation” (Roy 2010). Rather, it was appropriated as a part of the mediations of new media technologies that modern times brought along—a localization of global musical styles and modern technology localized in the context of India, by the Bombay film industry. Besides, Hindi film songs were (and are still) intrinsically connected with its films and vice-versa. So musicking with Hindi film songs was not just about music *per se*. It was an essential part of the whole experience of their socializing and imaginings: the social and cultural experience of watching films in cinema theatres/video parlours or television sets in their villages, in groups; aping the fashion styles of the film stars; making the stories of these films and the lives of the popular actors and actresses a part of their narratives; a vicarious experience of urban scape of cities like Bombay, Calcutta, etc., as well as places that were out of their bounds. Musicking of Hindi film songs was thus a part of the bandwagon of the hopeful possibilities of self-fashioning new selves and also experiencing new forms of socialization and recreation which technologies of the modern times entailed and was identified with. It was an

experiential and “phenomenological participation in modernity”—becoming *objects* as well as *subjects* of modernizing processes (Dissanayake 2003).

However, this fascination and imaginings with Hindi films and their songs have not extended as it was with the Hao-Tangkhuls, in the past. For the present youths, especially in their teens and early twenties, Hindi film songs or Bollywood music no longer allures them as it did for their parents. In spite of many Hao-Tangkhul youth now living in Indian metropolitan cities and relatively overcoming the language barrier that was there in the past, the place of Hindi film songs in their musical practices occupies little space. With increasing accessibility to diverse musical styles and cultures through various media/information technologies, especially Web 2.0, the palette of their musical choices hardly consider Hindi film songs or Bollywood music as a trendsetting culture. The choices that they have and the varied musical taste that they are exposed to, leaves them yearning for music and culture shared in a larger global context.

Nevertheless, the cinematic grammars of Bollywood films that was adopted by their elders in 1980s are often still carried over in their films and music videos that are produced today.

### **Christianity and Contemporary Hao-Tangkhul Musicking**

If there is one common musical practice which permeates the lives of majority, if not all Hao-Tangkhuls<sup>93</sup>—irrespective of age, gender, or place of habitation, whether permanent or temporary—it is the musicking in their worship. As detailed in the preceding chapter, the advent of Christian missionaries triggered a substantial transformation in their musical practices, especially within the realm of religion. Their conversion to Christianity entailed the adoption of a new musical style introduced by the Western missionaries, and the gradual withdrawal of their traditional music. Music became one of the most primary sites of contestation amongst the Christians and the non-Christian Hao-Tangkhuls. In the long run, as the strength of Christian Hao-Tangkhuls swelled it was the music that was adopted

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<sup>93</sup> There might be Hao-Tangkhuls who might not ascribe to Christian religion any longer, though that it is almost unheard of. But the majority of them were born into a Christian family. So, at certain point in time, if not now, they were exposed or had experienced the musicking in Christian worship—in their Church, congregational gatherings or within the confines of their homes.

as an essential part of their new faith which steadily overpowered their practices of traditional music. But this transformation didn't come about just as a result of Hao-Tangkhuls' conversion to Christianity. In fact, music was one of the key factors which initially drew them to Christianity, as well as played an influential role in the process of proselytization amongst the latter converts.

When Western Christian missionaries first approached the Nagas, they were already a singing people. As this new faith was enhanced with songs, they were often more receptive to the Christian gospel that was preached in their midst (Peseye 2003). Amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, the remarkable influence of music in their proselytization has been relayed by Reverend Somi,<sup>94</sup> as such:

In the early days of Christianity amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, there were just few people who had undergone Christian theological training. So, music was one of the key means for spreading the gospel. After every Sunday worship service, the Christian converts amongst them marched in their villages, all the while beating their *pung*<sup>95</sup> and singing hymns after hymns. This drew the attention of their non-Christian kinsmen and women, and through the words of these songs, many accepted Christ as their savior.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, in the Hao-Tangkhul hills, Christianity and musicking was intertwined right from its very inception. However, this was not just as result of the deeds of Western missionaries and early Hao-Tangkhul Christians; nor does it only have to do with the love of music by Hao-Tangkhuls. To a large extent, it was also the importance of music itself being ingrained in Christian religious doctrine. Biblical statements exalting the significance of music in Christian faith abounds:

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound... let them be jubilant, and everything in them. Then all the tree of the forest will sing for joy, they will sing before the Lord (Ps. 96:11-12, NIV). Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:19-20, NIV); Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; Play

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<sup>94</sup> Rev.Somi Kasomwoshi is a renowned Hao-Tangkhul missionary who is presently the pastor of Ukhrul Town Baptist Church. His remarks were personally narrated to the researcher in the course of fieldwork.

<sup>95</sup> Hao-Tangkhul traditional percussion musical instrument.

<sup>96</sup> The marching happens either in the evening or in the morning depending on the specific village. For example, in Halang village, such marching commenced in the evening before the night worship service. But in Hunphun village, it was right after the morning worship service. But what was common in such marching, was that it was mainly led by youths in the Church or a village.

skillfully with a shout of joy (Psalms 33:2-3, NASB); O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. (Psalms 95:1-2, KJV).

Given the significance of music in the Bible itself, then, it is no surprise that music has such a prominent place in Hao-Tangkhuls' Christian religious practices and rituals. Entrenched in the doctrine of their faith; inculcated and ritualized by Western Christian missionaries, as well as the early Hao-Tangkhul converts in their worship; refined by the generations that came along, music was and even now, thus deeply entrenched in their worship. It has become a means to express what they believe about God; at the same time, through the songs that they sing, their faith is also formed and strengthened (Kruschwitz 2006). It enriches their entire worship experience. In the words of Achui, a Christian missionary and a mother of two: "A Christian worship without music is dry. It is a necessity. Music is like heaven raining down on a parched land."

#### **(i) Musicking in Church: The Significance of Hymns**

*"What black people are singing religiously will provide a clue to what is happening to them sociologically."*<sup>97</sup>

In the present context of Hao-Tangkhuls, the church has emerged as a key space where a major portion of Hao-Tangkhul live musical performances and musicking culture takes place—and this musicking spills over into their everyday musicking too. The standardization of music practice that is set in the church are further incorporated in their religious practice beyond the church and in many aspects of their social occasions which is not necessarily a religious program. Here is a short account of their standardized worship format in the church:

In their usual Sunday worship services and on other religious programs in the church, the singing of hymns by the church choir (led by a Choir master) often welcomes the church members into the church. Soon, they are joined by the congregation in singing the hymns. This congregational singing of hymns continue until the worship leader or

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<sup>97</sup> The saying of one Rev. Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, as quoted by Weekes in exploring the relationship between the contemporary Black Church and contemporary Gospel Music (Weekes 2005, 43).

conductor takes charge and initiates the flow of the program. From here on the hymns are confined to specific songs pre-marked before the worship commenced. These hymns vary in every service—often, it is entailed by specific Christian occasions, as well as per the choice of the church leaders or the people allotted with that responsibility. After the leader highlights the program of the service, *Haokaphok laa* (Opening hymn) is sung by the congregation to begin the worship. This is followed by an opening prayer, then the necessary announcements on the activities and information of the particular church, followed by another congregational singing of *Kachigat laa* (Offering hymn) as the church ushers collect the small token of thanksgiving cash offered by the church members. After that, if there is any special musical presentation, the time will be given for such performance. Then, the reading of the Bible Scripture commences, followed by another (pulpit) hymn to felicitate the key message of the service—which is shared by the church pastor or the assigned person for the worship service. After the sermon is over, the congregation sings the *Kakup laa* (or Closing hymn) right before the benediction, which marks the end of the program.

Depending on the particular church and specific occasions, there are slight variations in the order and the content of worship service, but what is constant is the place of the congregational singing of hymns to mark and supplement the shifts from one ritualistic act to another. All these hymns are also drawn only from their standardized hymnbook, *Khokharum Laa* (Worship Music or Songs).<sup>98</sup> Besides these hymns, no other songs or musical style are entertained in their congregational singing. This is as a result of the sanctification of their hymnbook as an essential medium of doctrinal instruction, besides the Bible (King 2008). As Shimreiwung, a young Hao-Tangkhul scholar noted, “By convention and also as an article of faith, these songs were considered as sanctified, therefore inside the church only songs from the hymnbook are sung. Except during the presentations of *special number* by some individual or groups the convention of singing only from the hymnbook is not breached” (Shimreiwung 2009, 140).

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<sup>98</sup> This hymnbook is a collection of translated hymns drawn from standard Western Christian hymnbooks, as well as few songs composed by Hao-Tangkhul composers, in the tradition of the Western Choral music. The present *khokharum Laa* also contains the musical notation of the hymnals in *tonic sol-fa* system.

This conventional adherence to the singing of hymns as the appropriate music for worship have been traditionalized to such an extent that in their congregation within the church, the possibility of worshipping with other genres and styles of music, even their very own traditional music, is barely considered. In fact, in some instances, there had been resistance to attempts of incorporating their traditional music in their worship. For instance, in 2013, under the initiative of a few enterprising youth, a *Cultural Sunday* was organized in Union Baptist Church, Ukhrul—where church members were encouraged to attend the Sunday worship service in their traditional attires, and as a part of the worship program, a song competition was also organized, where Christian songs in their traditional musical style was performed.<sup>99</sup> But this initiative was thwarted after just one commemoration. With dejection, Chihansung, the then youth pastor of the church remarked as such, “Cultural Sunday was ceased by the church deacons, as they considered such practice, unchristianly—*Haocham*—a practice of their non-Christian ancestors.”

Even amongst the youth, this conception of hymns as the appropriate music for congregational worship is quite strong. Besides hymns and contemporary *praise & worship* music, many of them mentioned that they were uneasy with idea of worshipping with other styles of music. There is a sense of comfort in what is already in practice. For instance, Thingmasotmi Varu, a youth worship leader, based in Ukhrul, was of the opinion that though hymns are old, “there is a new revelation in every old song when they worship earnestly.” Shapmiyo Langyza,<sup>100</sup> another Hao Tangkhul youth, also opines that while singing hymns, “music seems to be less overpowering over the words in the song. So, hymns are suitable in daily worship practices.” Further, Shimreisa Chahongnao,<sup>101</sup> also remarks that Christianity and the hymns that have now adopted is a “good change.” So, in his view, trying to improvise with other styles of music, even their own traditional music is not necessarily healthy. In spite of this strong attachment with hymns, there are also instances where some of the youth stated that any music can be used to worship God. That, hymns do not have to be the only music for their worship. But these same youths were also

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<sup>99</sup> The idea of celebrating a Cultural Sunday as some of the organizers opined, was to promote the inclusion of their traditional music in their worship and at same time revive their traditional music in the long run.

<sup>100</sup> Shapmiyo Langyza completed his graduation in Philosophy from Delhi University. Presently, he is in the process of getting himself admitted in a Christian theological college.

<sup>101</sup> Shimreisa Chahongnao is an aspiring academician presently pursuing MPhil in African Studies, at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

of the view that accommodating other musical styles in their worship will have to be a gradual process, as the larger congregation are accustomed to singing hymns.

Another phenomenon that concerns the singing of hymns is that they are not confined to their Sunday worship services and church premises. Rather, it permeates in their everyday lives—in the confines of their homes, their marriages, public gatherings and even festivals which are not necessarily a Christian occasion.<sup>102</sup> In all these occasions hymns are a natural presence—a living aspect of their life. This profound presence and significance of hymns in the lives of Hao-Tangkhuls can perhaps be best observed in their funerals. Here, singing hymns comprise an essential component of the entire funeral process. Hymns are sung not only in the funeral rite, but they are also provisions of succor in the entire mourning processes—preceding and post the burial.<sup>103</sup> The lyrics in the hymns and the act of singing hymns aids in the rituals and processes of bidding goodbye and affirming their hope of meeting the departed, in heaven. What *Kathi laa* (Death songs) was for their pre-Christian forefathers, now it is hymns for the present Hao-Tangkhuls. But unlike in their pre-Christian days, where the songs sang in a burial was about extoling the virtues and propitiating the spirits of dead person, in the Christian context, the hymns are about uplifting the living with the vision of the day when all of them, including the departed, will meet in heaven; and also reassuring the everlasting presence of God in their life—in this world and beyond. Singing and meditating on the words in their hymns, thus becomes an act of professing and strengthening their faith in Christ—to God, as well as amongst themselves.

“Salu, khamatanwui Laa Salu” (Sing on, Sing Songs of Jubilation),<sup>104</sup> a hymn from the repertoire of their Khokharum Laa (Worship hymns) provides a glimpse of what hymns means and embodies, in the lowest moments, as well as the happiest days of Hao-Tangkhuls’ lives.

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<sup>102</sup> Even in the few traditional festivals that are being commemorated, hymns are not absent either. As recent as 2016, in Halang village, *Champha phanit*, a traditional Hao-Tangkhul thanksgiving festival, was celebrated with a hymn-singing competition as the primary event of the festival.

<sup>103</sup> Until the burial of the dead body, it is a social practice amongst them, where the villagers, friends or the members (specially the youth) of the church to which the deceased belong, to accompany and comfort the bereaved family through the singing of hymns—often all day and all night long—as the family mourns.

<sup>104</sup> “Salu, Khamathanwui laa salu” is KKLNo. 518 in Hao-Tangkhul hymnbook. This song is a translation of *Sing on*, a popular Christian hymn composed by celebrated Fanny J. Crosby in 1885.

*Salu, Khamathawui laa salu, leikashibing!*  
*Leikashiwui laakhon chi, shongfa kazat mathei.*  
*Yirkhameiya kaphung, ithum kangashanda;*  
*Ngashit kahai ngalei, Jordan kong khalong theira.*

*O nimshimri kahai laa, akhonchi shalaga;*  
*Iwui mangla ngaphumchao haida masot chikat*

*Salu khamathanwui laa salu, Vareshibing!*  
*Okathuili leilakha, Jesuwui ming vaolu.*  
*Ngatangkhami, huikhami, mi kachida hanglu;*  
*Leikashi laa kasa, saikora razangranu.*

*Salu, khamathanwui laa salu, huikhamibing!*  
*Ithum Awunga Wungram, marashung ranglakha.*  
*Tam akhali theinaora, leikashi ngasotnao,*  
*Leikashi kong kanda, athumna ngaraisara.*

Sing on, ye joyful pilgrims, nor think the moment long;  
 My faith is heavenward rising, with every tuneful song;  
 Lo! On the mount of blessing, the glorious mount, I stand;  
 And looking over Jordan, I see the Promised Land.

Sing on, O blissful music!  
 With every note you raise,  
 My heart is filled with rapture,  
 My soul is lost in praise.

Sing on, ye joyful pilgrims, while here on earth we stay;  
 Let songs of home and Jesus, beguile each fleeting day;  
 Sing on the grand old story, of His redeeming love,  
 The everlasting chorus that fills the realm above

Sing on, ye joyful pilgrims, the time will not be long,  
 Till, in our Father's kingdom, we swell a nobler song;  
 Where angels there are waiting, to greet us on the shore,  
 We'll meet beyond the river, where surges roll no more.

As King writing on the prominence of hymns in Victorian England remarked, perhaps it wouldn't be too much of an overstatement to state that hymns provide the most characteristic expression of Hao-Tangkhul Christianity, as well their musicking (King 2008).



## (ii) Musicking in the Church and Youth

For many Hao-Tangkhul youth today,<sup>105</sup> musicking in the church continues to play an important role in their Christian life as well as their musical practices. The congregational nature of singing hymns in their worship nurtures their faith and inculcates in them what it means *to be a Church*. That, they are not in this alone—but are a part of a community of faith (Kruschwitz 2006)—a “body of Christ” (Corinthians 12:7). But more significantly, when it comes to their musicking, it is their musical practices in the church which serves as an important musical foundation in nurturing their musical potentials and expressions. Right from the days of their Sunday schools,<sup>106</sup> they are taught to sing in their church. Not necessarily as a musical training, but singing is imbibed as a part of the Christian education. Christian children-songs, primarily in English, are learned and sung not only within the hours of the Sunday school, but they are also presented as *special performances* in their Sunday church programs, as well as in Christian occasions, such as *Palm Sunday*, *Easter Sunday*, etc. These performances become their first live performance in front of a congregation or public—for a vast majority, if not all. In later years, as youth, many of them also take their place in the church choir, where they are trained to read the tonic sol-fa music system and also to sing in either of the four parts of a Western Choral music—soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. These experiences might not necessarily equip them as professional singers, but it does boost their confidence of singing in a congregation, and also teaches them the social skills to work and sing as a group. Moreover, the various choral competitions and choir music camps organized in their local churches, as well as by the larger Hao-Tangkhul Church bodies,<sup>107</sup> provides them the platform to perform and compete out of the confines of their villages—which provides an opportunity for exposure and camaraderie amongst Hao-Tangkhuls from different villages. Over the years, few amongst them also ends up as choir masters in their local churches, thus resulting in a regenerative

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<sup>105</sup> By youth, the reference is particularly to young Hao-Tangkhul boys and girls in their teens to those in their late twenties.

<sup>106</sup> Sunday school is a reference to Christian educational activities and classes that are undertaken in a church premise, especially for children. This classes are held every Sunday, either in the morning or at noon depending on the particular. Here, children are taught teachings of Christ and the narratives in the Bible. Besides that, they learn and Christian songs; engage in recreational activities which will promote a sense of fellowship amongst the children, and so on.

<sup>107</sup> Some of the biggest Hao-Tangkhul Baptist Church bodies are: Tangkhul Naga Baptist Convention, Tangkhul Baptist Churches Association, Southern Tangkhul Naga Baptist Association, etc.

practice where church choir masters are produced amongst them—to take over from the older generations and sustaining the musicking in their churches.

Another significant practice in the Hao-Tangkhul Churches which promotes musical performances amongst the youth is the place of *Masot laa* (special number) and their musical engagements in *Bible Camps*<sup>108</sup> and *Youth Services*.<sup>109</sup> As mentioned earlier, it is only in such occasions that the church members have the liberty to engage in musical styles beyond hymns—in their worship within the church. Taking due advantage of such opportunity, young Hao-Tangkhuls perform some of their choicest songs, in English, as well as in Hao-Tangkhul. Most often, the songs are contemporary popular music of pop and country genre, at times slow rock too.<sup>110</sup> In such musical performances, young Hao-Tangkhul boys and girls not only get a chance to worship God but also to harness and display their musical talents—employing a variety of musical instruments, such as keyboard, guitars, shakers, violins, and drums. In these musical performances and occasions, the versatility of these musical instruments can be exploited to its best. Besides, given the paucity of professional live-performance spaces in their society, such occasions become a vital platform for aspiring musicians and many youth to utilize and exhibit their musical talents.

Furthermore, delving into the history of Hao-Tangkhuls musicking in the church, it is worth noting that, it was within the confines of the church that the Hao-Tangkhuls had initially adopted a Western proscenium model of stage performance—where there is a distinct separation of an elevated stage for the musical performance, and a separate place for that of the audience. This began not necessarily with the intentions of assigning a distinct stage for musical performances, rather, it is very likely that such set-up might have

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<sup>108</sup> *Bible Camps* are a form of summer Christian camps, often organized in the school summer breaks. The duration of the camp can vary from 3 days to 6 days depending on the particular camp. The Bible camp can be either held in their local churches or in some other areas away from their village or town—often in a secluded area. In such camps, young boys and girls experience a rigorous few days of learning Christian narratives and doctrines, devotions, musicking, group sharing and game activities etc. Such Bible camps often results in many young Hao-Tangkhul youth accepting Christ as their personal savior—a change of life—or being reborn or *born again* in Christian terminology.

<sup>109</sup> Lately, in their Christian youth services, worshipping with contemporary Christian music or *Praise & worship* music as some of them refer to, instead of singing hymnals, are getting prominence amongst few of the Hao-Tangkhul Churches.

<sup>110</sup> *Masot laa* performances include a variety of musical style—Western contemporary music, sometimes Meitei gospel songs (primarily in the churches in Imphal valley), Country gospels, Pop music, etc.

been shaped by the architectural setup of a church—which was introduced by Western Christian missionaries. In the construction of a church building, the *pulpit* from where sermons are preached or shared, are distinctly set up directly facing the congregation and usually placed on an elevated platform. Over the years, in these raised platforms, further spaces were made for seating the church pastor, church elders/deacons, and church choirs. Inadvertently, the space for special music performances or presentations were enacted on the stage, facing the congregation. As a result, there began a clear demarcation of a performing stage and that of the audience which was very unlike their traditional musical performance spaces where there was no such permanent erected stage for musical performances. In the past, at most, in festive occasions, the demarcated spaces for musical performances was either in the yard of the village chief or in open spaces in the village where the villagers could congregate. There were special performances, but it was not in the sense of contemporary conception of a separate stage and a distinct identity of audience and performer. Musical performances or expressions were conducive of accompaniment from their fellow villagers. But in their musicking within the church, as a distinct stage was maintained, there came a separation of the performers with the audience. Further, such tradition also led to the practice of a congregation often being a mute spectator<sup>111</sup> or rather restrained—apart from the clap of appreciation at the end of musical performances.

However, when it comes to the use of musical instruments, it is the musical culture in the larger society which influenced their music in the Church. The early days of Hao-Tangkhuls church musicking was mostly without the musical instruments that is there now.<sup>112</sup> And in this change, Hao-Tangkhul youth have a big contribution. It is their exposure to various musical styles and proficiency of adopting and playing new musical instruments that the musical expressions in their worship are enriched with new musical sounds. Without the youth, the musical expressions in Hao-Tangkhul churches would not be what it is now, but at the same time, nor would the musicking of the youth be the same without the culture of music in their church.

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<sup>111</sup> By mute spectator, the researcher is only referring to the general visible and audible reactions in a church congregation rather than engaging with the semantics of how the musical performances are enjoyed by the congregation and in their individual capacity.

<sup>112</sup> Based on the narratives that are around, probably guitars, keyboards, drums, etc. were mostly likely incorporated from 1980s onwards.

## **Guitar Culture in the Hills of Hao-Tangkhul Nagas:**

### ***Intersections of Global Cultural Flows and Hao-Tangkhul Musicking and Migration***

*“Every good thing happens with a guitar.”*<sup>113</sup>

So far, accounts of Hao-Tangkhul musicking Hindi film songs, and the musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls in relation to their faith, especially within the church, has been detailed. Now, in the final section of this chapter, the attempt will be to highlight another key aspects of Hao-Tangkhul musicking—the embeddedness of the guitar in their social musicking and its ubiquitous prominence in their social lives. In doing so, this account will trace the narrative of the guitar in their hills, from its early inception—tracing how and in what ways this musical instrument has come to occupy such a conspicuous and privileged position in the musicking of Hao-Tangkhul society.

#### **(i) Early History**

Due to the absence of literature on the guitar amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, it is hard to ascertain the exact date of its introduction in their musicking. Perhaps, a study with a population sample not only confined to Hao-Tangkhuls but also including the Northeastern region of India can yield a more precise date. But as of now, based on the primary data collected through interviews and discussions with elders from the community, the earliest date that the researcher could narrow down to, is around 1952-53. This date is drawn from the account of Chahongnao Shimdhar Keishing, an 84 years old man from Lusingh village.<sup>114</sup> He is also one of the very few surviving Hao-Tangkhul who witnessed the transition of Hao-Tangkhul Nagas from being non-Christians to a Christian majority community. According to him, the first guitar that he saw in his village was around the aforementioned date, i.e. 1952-53, when he was still a very young man. However, he added that, back then, there were only few guitars.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, many other Hao-Tangkhuls also refer to the initial resonance of guitar in their society around such time—roughly 1950s-

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<sup>113</sup> Remarkd by Thingmasotmi Varu, a young *Praise and Worship* leader, based in Ukhul.

<sup>114</sup> Lusingh village, also known as Loushing village is situated in Phungyar sub-division of Ukhul district, Manipur.

<sup>115</sup> Shimdhar also cited his experience of spotting guitar on his visits to Homalin Township (Myanmar) in 1957.

1960s—crediting it with Hao-Tangkhul students who went to study in places like Shillong<sup>116</sup> and Guwahati.<sup>117</sup> These accounts give some clues to the initial sources of the guitar in their hills.

Guitar seems to have trickled into the Hao-Tangkhul areas from two possible routes: Indian cities like Guwahati, Shillong (primarily) as mentioned above; and through Myanmar.<sup>118</sup> Ngachonmi Chamroy, a native of Halang village<sup>119</sup> narrated that, in the past, Burmese cattle herders/traders (which include both ethnic Burmese as well as Somra Hao-Tangkhuls)<sup>120</sup> used to sing along with guitars, on their journey back to their native villages/places—after having sold their goods (mainly cattle) to the Hao-Tangkhuls in the Indian side of the fence. In such encounters, Hao-Tangkhuls were exposed to the guitar and also acquired it in the long run. Similarly, Khathing Keishing, a native of Alang village<sup>121</sup> recalls that guitars were initially brought to his village from Myanmar. But in his case, rather than the Burmese, it was Hao-Tangkhuls who were serving in the Burmese army who brought along guitars on their visits back home. He further mentioned that, in 1970, he himself bought a Burmese made guitar on his visit to Tamu Town, in Myanmar. Akin to these narratives, Yaruingam Awungshi, a professor in Delhi University, remarks that he is not sure whether it was from Myanmar that the guitar was sourced, but he definitely recalls the popularity of Burmese-made guitars in his younger days. On a similar note, Rewben Mashangva,<sup>122</sup> a renowned Hao-Tangkhul musician, credits his first guitar

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<sup>116</sup> Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, is also popularly known as the *Rock Capital of India* because of its vibrant music culture. In the past and even now, this city is a popular destination amongst students from the states in Northeast region of India—to pursue higher education.

<sup>117</sup> Guwahati is the largest city of Assam.

<sup>118</sup> According to Ministry of DONER (Ministry for Development of North Eastern Region), Govt. of India, Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, shares 1642 kilometers of international border with India—confined solely in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland.

<sup>119</sup> Halang village is adjacent to Hunphun village, the place where the district headquarter of Ukhrul district is situated.

<sup>120</sup> On the whims of colonial powers, the Nagas ancestral domain were divided between Myanmar and India, without the consent of the Nagas—resulting in many Naga lands, including Hao-Tangkhuls, being divided into two countries. Somra Tangkhuls is a reference to the Hao-Tangkhuls whose villages were demarcated as falling under Myanmar.

<sup>121</sup> Alang village is situated in Phungyar sub-division of Ukhrul district, Manipur.

<sup>122</sup> Rewben Mashangva is renowned in Manipur, as well as amongst many music circles, for his unique musical style—which is a blend of Blues and traditional Hao-Tangkhul musical style. He refers to this musical style as Naga folk Blues. Till date, he has performed in several arenas in the country, as well as abroad. In 2012, he was awarded the *Musician National Tribal Award* in 2011-12, by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India—for his contribution to the development of tribal music in the country. *Songs of Mashangva*, a documentary film based on his life, was also released in 2011.

to his father—who made it based on Burmese-made guitars.<sup>123</sup> However, he was of the opinion that in spite of the possibility of the guitar’s origin (amongst Hao-Tangkhuls) in Myanmar, the popularization of the guitar in Hao-Tangkhul hills began only in the 1960s when Hao-Tangkhuls studying in places like Shillong and Guwahati brought back Indian-made guitars, and began actively composing and singing Hao-Tangkhul songs—following the style of Western country and pop-rock genres.<sup>124</sup>

In congruence with this argument, many elderly Hao-Tangkhuls similarly opined that it was from amongst these students that a new generation of guitar wielders and singers emerged—Ramyang (Seikhor village), Columbus (Hungpung village), and Shimreisa (Hunphun Village), who was also a member of the first known Hao-Tangkhul band, The First Chapter. Later on, they were joined by a younger generation of Hao-Tangkhul pop-country singers<sup>125</sup>—Rockerson,<sup>126</sup> Remnu, Ningkhan, Worthingla, Wungchan and Surrender to name a few. These were singers whose songs were heard in many parts of the Hao-Tangkhul country. And in their musical compositions and performances, the guitar was one of the key musical instrument.<sup>127</sup>

Interestingly, at this point in time, the guitar was confined only with the musical performances of ‘entertainment’ songs. The guitar was then hardly employed in the domain of religion. As some elderly Hao-Tangkhuls remarked, the guitar was strongly associated with *Lumlao/Mahon-ngapao*<sup>128</sup> and was thus deemed inappropriate to be employed in a religious service.<sup>129</sup> This early history of the guitar being shunned from their religious spaces seems quite surprising when viewed in the light of the unhindered use of the guitar in their contemporary Christian worship. Perhaps, such notion of ‘appropriate’ and

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<sup>123</sup> *Songs of Mashangva*, DVD, directed by Oinam Doren, 2011, India, Our Village Films Production, 2011.

<sup>124</sup> Shimdhar Keishing and Ngachonmi Chamroy also made similar reference to this period in 1960s, when Hao-Tangkhul Naga songs were broadcasted regularly from AIR, Imphal.

<sup>125</sup> Not all of them went to Shillong and Guwahati to pursue higher education, but few of them mentioned that they were sensitized to guitar through the students who went to these cities.

<sup>126</sup> One of his most renowned song goes as such: “Ava ili guitar lomilo...” (“Father buy me a guitar...”)

<sup>127</sup> These musicians brought about a new burst of energy in Hao-Tangkhul musicking, as they went about performing in their social gatherings, festivals and even in Radio Stations. Here, it is also worth mentioning that in the popularization of their songs, radio had a big role. At this point in time, the only mode of listening to their songs, was only live performances—in their social and musical events. But with the inauguration of AIR Imphal on August 15, 1963, these musicians amongst them, had a platform, where their songs could be heard in all their villages.

<sup>128</sup> *Lumlao* and *mahon-ngapao* is a colloquial reference to social entertainment and merrymaking.

<sup>129</sup> Popular Western music, especially Country music, as well as Hindi film songs, was steadily gaining popularity amongst Hao-Tangkhuls—through radio, cinema theatres, and gramophone to a certain extent.

‘inappropriate’ music/musical instrument for a religious space, might have been possibly influenced by Hao-Tangkhul traditional conceptions of associating particular songs or music with specific rituals, festivals and occasions. Further, such a conception of the guitar as being inappropriate for religious practice likely had to do with the guitar being ingrained in a peculiar Hao-Tangkhuls’ social activity or form of courting—*Meisum Kapam*—a practice which can be considered as a remnant or transformation of the social practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls, in their *Longshim*. As detailed in the earlier chapters, Longshim was the Hao-Tangkhul youth dormitory where young boys and girls were sheltered and trained in various life skills—martial skills, music, weaving, and so on. Besides its significance as an educational and social institution, Longshim was also the *space* for courtship among young Hao-Naga men and women—where music plays a significant role. In this effort, young Hao-Tangkhul men would use musical instruments like *tingteila* or *sipa* to woo their loved ones. Remnants of some of these social practices were carried on in their *Meisum Kapam*—where groups of young Hao-Tangkhul men or an individual would visit a maiden’s home and try to woo her.<sup>130</sup> But in the Christianized context, it is with the guitar rather than *tingteila* or *sipa*, which young boys or men strum along, to accompany contemporary Western popular songs, as well as Hao-Tangkhul pop (love) songs.<sup>131</sup>

Another social practice with which the guitar was strongly embedded in, was the common Hao-Tangkhul socialization which was once quite conspicuous, but now less often—the sight of young boys gathered in public spaces—either in a roadside, a local *adda*, in front of a Pan dukan (shop), and so on. In such socializing, which is often in the evening and night, young boys walk around and gather in groups in their local hub—all the while, they revel in musicking popular Hao-Tangkhul love songs, Western music (rock ballads, country, and pop love songs), as well as Hindi film songs—as they strum their guitars.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> *Meisum Kapam* doesn’t necessarily have to be a courting between just two individuals. In its initial stage, it is often in groups. Moreover, it doesn’t always have to be courting, either. It is also a social practice where youths can gather and socialize.

<sup>131</sup> Hao-Tangkhul pop songs or popular songs is a reference to songs which are produced by Hao-Tangkhuls in their own language, in the fashion of Western musical styles. Such songs are primarily love songs and of pop genre.

<sup>132</sup> But in the present context, such social practices of *Meisum kapam* and musicking by the roadside are waning steadily. Probably, this has to do with some of the changing conditions of their society: the migration of many youths to metropolitan cities in pursuit higher education and in search of jobs; changing aspirations of their youth along with the awareness of the conditionings and actualities of a global world; increasing

Further, the guitar also played a key role in Hao-Tangkhul *Lungchān Laa*<sup>133</sup> competitions that were organised in their social gatherings on festive occasions. In such competitions, accompanied with an acoustic guitar, a woman and a man often sings in duet. The competing couples tries to entertain the audience not just with their singing but also by mimicking the choreography of songs—which includes classic, as well as contemporary Hao-Tangkhul popular love songs.

Often, these activities and social spaces—Meisum kapam, Lungchān laa khangahan, and young boys’ gatherings, becomes the primary occasion for many Hao-Tangkhul youth, especially boys, to play and learn the guitar—through peer guidance.<sup>134</sup> Such socialising stimulated their musical engagements—exploring and sharing music—at the same time, sustaining a communal social culture. Moreover, such socializing and musicking aided in their identity formation as these occasions served not only as means of entertainment but it also sustains their social and musicking culture, consequently, strengthening their conception of community bond; by sustaining some of the social practices of their ancestors, though tweaked in a new context<sup>135</sup>—by reliving the popular love songs of their parents and continuing these musical traditions through the love songs of their own times. Such musicking thus become sites of constructing and sustaining cultural memories of their community. And in these processes, the guitar is not the key agent, but it is always an accompanying friend.

## (ii) The Present

Over the years, ingrained in such social-musicking, the guitar has now acquired a meaningful status as part of their “individual-collective musical world,” wherein it has developed a social life akin to that of social beings (Dawe 2012). “Empowered and agential” (Dawe 2013), the guitar has now become one of the key aspects of Hao-

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individualization and also the possibility of accessing various recreational activities and technologies, and so on.

<sup>133</sup> *Lungchan Laa* is a reference to classic as well as contemporary Hao-Tangkhul popular love songs which is influenced by various Western music styles, as well as Hindi film music. This songs are different from the traditional Hao-Tangkhul songs which were sung and practiced in a different musical style.

<sup>134</sup> Undergoing formal music training or attending formal guitar classes are confined to only a few.

<sup>135</sup> Here, the reference is only to the social practices of their ancestors but not their traditional musical style and songs.



Tangkhuls' "cultural memory" and "participation in social life" (Dawe 2012). In the ongoing "repurposing of music" (Straw 2012), over several decades, the guitar has now been integrated not only in their socio-cultural practices but even in their religious practices too. Today almost all their churches employ the guitar in their worship—in the church as well as beyond. Guitar is used to accompany not only the singing of the congregation but also in the special performances that are presented in the church. In fact, for many young Hao-Tangkhuls, it is the musicking in their worship programs, which has become one of the key occasion to play their guitar along, in front of a congregation.

Today, there is no doubt that in the contemporary musicking of the Hao-Tangkhuls, the guitar is indeed the most popular and widely used musical instrument. Guitar is embedded in their social musicking to such an extent that without it, most of their musical performances will be incomplete, if not impossible. This phenomenon raises intriguing questions on how of all the musical instruments, it is only the guitar which has come to play such an important aspect of their musicking. What aspects of the guitar and what agencies made it possible for the guitar to be inscribed so successfully in the repurposing of Hao-Tangkhu social and musical practices? This issues merits an investigation beyond the socio-musicking practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls, but also a reflection on the unique characteristics of the guitar itself, as well as the intersections of local and global forces which has catapulted the guitar as a cultural icon, not only for the Hao-Tangkhuls but around the whole world.

In the context of the Hao-Tangkhuls, when the guitar was relatively new amongst them, the composite material of the guitar was such that local carpenters could resort to making their own guitars, without necessarily buying it from a store. Innovative and versatile carpenters amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls could resort to making a guitar from materials available in their environment. This was an instrument that they could manage to build in their own homes, without necessarily incurring heavy expenses—by innovatively adopting materials that were used in different context. Wooden pegs were used as tuning keys and in some instances due to lack of easy access to guitar strings, even iron binding wires were used in its place. Besides the material innovations that one could resort to in

the construction of a guitar, even when it has to be bought, guitar was relatively more affordable in comparison with musical instruments like piano, drum, etc.<sup>136</sup>

Moreover, not everyone necessarily had to own a guitar, to play it. The portability of the guitar made it convenient to be carried around easily in their social settings—where it could be played by many, and as mentioned earlier it could be learned informally. On top of that, as some of the Hao-Tangkhul musicians mentioned, the versatility of the guitar is such that it can be adopted and played along with various types of songs and musical genre—making it a preferred choice, in many musical performances.

Apart from the compatibility of the guitar in the socio-economic context of the Hao-Tangkhuls' lives and musicking, the guitar is also one such musical instrument which is entangled in global cultural flows (Dawe 2013). As Shimreiwung noted, the adoption of the guitar amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls came along with the songs that have been learned through listening to the music records of distant culture (Shimreiwung 2009). This aspect of cultural flow through the overlapping intersections of the various “scapes” (especially mediascape, technoscape and ethnoscape) as Appadurai delineated (Appadurai 1996), has to be taken into account—as the narratives of the guitar's increasing permeation amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls is in congruence with rising movement of Hao-Tangkhuls beyond their hills, the penetration of new technologies amongst them, as well as the increasing popularity of guitar on the world stage. Perhaps, a small detour on the guitar's history is needed to buttress the significance of the intersections of these scapes in the guitar's rise to popularity in the world, as well as with the Hao-Tangkhuls.

Due to scant historical evidences, the issue of dating the precise origin of the guitar is no easy task, and it is a contestable domain. However, the birth of the guitar can be credited to the musical cultures of ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome and the routes of economic and cultural exchange that existed between Mediterranean Europe, Arabic Asia, and North Africa sometime between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries (Waksman, Corrado, and Sauvalle 2003). But it was the guitar's arrival in the North American continent through slave-trade and European colonial expansions which would mark the major turning point in the history of the guitar. Over the course of nineteenth and twentieth century, the guitar

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<sup>136</sup> Harmonica or Baja (local name) was another musical instrument which was very popular amongst the older Hao-Tangkhuls.

underwent a striking process of “creolization.” Central to this process was the syncretization of African and European musical practices that led to the emergence of a new sort of vernacular North American music post the American civil war—which would dramatically shift the cultural ground on which the guitar stood (Waksman, Corrado, and Sauvalle 2003). In America, the guitar immersed within the new musical genres of ragtime, jazz, and blues and soon gained popularity to some extent. Guitar became the emblematic instrument of the *blues* and emerged as a key forefront musical instrument from the shadow of its past when the guitar’s role was limited to rhythmic and harmonic background, complementing other musical instruments<sup>137</sup> (Evans 2001).

If it was the blues tradition that aided in catapulting the guitar into the forefront, it was the ‘Rock n Roll’ wave that sealed the guitar as a cultural icon. It began in the 1950s led by the likes of Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, The Evelyn Brothers; in the 60s it was The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Doors, the protest songs of Bob Dylan in the backdrop of American-Vietnam war, and the legendary Jimi Hendrix; Led Zeppelin, AC/DC, Queen and The Sex Pistols in the 70s, and so on. But, remarkably, in the popularity of these bands and their guitaring, the successful amplification of the guitar had a major role.

In the early twentieth century, attempts were made to amplify the guitar with the intention of positioning the guitar into a more prominent place from its past position as mere rhythm instrument, and also to be heard through the various wind instruments, the bass, and the drums. In this effort, in the early phases of the development of the electric guitar, weak amplifiers unable to bear the load of plugged electric guitars resulted in *noises* such as feedback and distortions. But soon this introduced a new way of guitar language. The controlling and maneuvering of these feedbacks and distortions became an essential technique in the mastering of modern electric guitars. With the advent of this extreme amplification, rock guitarists more and more came to embody a warrior, or perhaps a knight, able to tame the wild monster that a guitar connected to such a rig is (Ostberg & Hartmann 2005). Besides, the marriage of the guitar and electricity inserted new symbolical meanings and identifications with electric guitar. As electricity was associated

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<sup>137</sup> The evolution of blues musical styles were also influenced by guitar traditions in Mexico, Italy, Spain and Hawaii (Evans 2001).

with progress and urbanization—a sense of the cutting edge and the possibilities of the future—these meanings attached themselves to the electric guitar as well (Ryan & Peterson 2001). Thus youth across the world (especially Western) could associate with the guitar in reinventing themselves in vision of musical rebellion and independence, embodying the cultural values of the youth movement of the time (Ostberg & Hartmann 2005).

Now, coming back to the context of Hao-Tangkhuls, as mentioned earlier, the origin of the guitar amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls began with the movements of Hao-Tangkhuls, as well as Burmese citizens, within the Hao-Tangkhul hills and Myanmar. However, its popularization began only post 1960s, with the migration of Hao-Tangkhuls to neighboring cities like Shillong and Guwahati. This was the phase when the guitar was getting into the forefront of commercial popular music—with the rising popularity of singers like Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash and later, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, etc. Coincidentally, the songs of Shillong and Guwahati returned Hao-Tangkhuls, such as late Ramyang Pharung, Columbus, Shimreisa and that of The First Chapter were heavily based on the guitar. In fact, The First Chapter were alleged to have been influenced by Western popular bands like The Beatles, CCR, as well as Burmese songs.<sup>138</sup> These students, on their return their homes, soon began composing and performing actively in their social settings, along with their guitars. Before long, new Hao-Tangkhul pop-country singers, as well as Christian music composers, also emerged. But at this point in time, the technology and means to record and store their songs was a facility that was still inaccessible to them. So, their performances were heard mainly live in their social gatherings and through live radio broadcasting—where the guitar was one of the main musical instruments that accompanied their songs. In addition, the audio of the guitar was also increasingly being heard through Hindi film songs, as well as Western songs that were broadcasted on radio. Besides that, through cinema, especially commercial Hindi films, Hao-Tangkhuls were increasingly exposed to visuals and audio of the guitar being appropriated in popular culture.

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<sup>138</sup> One of their popular song ‘Achonli ngashit kahai’ was allegedly a tune from a Burmese song, rendered with Hao-Tangkhul lyrics. Considering the prevalence of Hao-Tangkhuls frequenting nearby Burmese towns to and fro, as well as the possibility of listening to *Radio Rangoon*, it is highly possible that Burmese songs as well as the guitar playing style that were popular in Myanmar might have been listen to and assimilated in the Tangkhul musical practices too.

All this while, movements of Hao-Tangkhuls were also steadily rising—in Imphal, Guwahati, Shillong, and even in Myanmar—leading to an increasing accumulation and proliferation of the guitar amongst them—consequently, the guitar getting further appropriated in their social and musical practices. Then came cassette technology in the 1980s, which enabled the birth of Hao-Tangkhul music ‘industry’; it was the beginning of Hao-Tangkhuls recording their own audio albums,<sup>139</sup> and later on films (Manuel 1993). The guitar being already being adopted in their musical practices, it was naturally incorporated in their musical recordings, and from then on, the guitar became an almost permanent feature in all their studio albums. Besides, pirated cassettes of Western rock bands, as well as country musicians, were soon easily available in their hills. So, they could regularly listen to these bands on their tape players, further cementing the popularity of guitar. On top of that, by 1990s television programs were not confined to Doordarshan any longer. With the entry of STAR (Satellite Television Asian Region) in Indian television, exclusive music channels (targeting the youth) like *MTV* and *Channel V* were accessible to Hao-Tangkhuls—leading to an increasing visual exposure (besides audio) to Western rock bands where the guitar had a prominent presence—both in terms of sound and visuals. At that point in time, Western rock genre enjoyed a huge popularity amongst the youth, especially men. As a result, unlike in the older generations when it was mainly the acoustic guitars, electric guitars got prominence with the youth and so was the notion of forming rock bands of their own. Simultaneously, these imaginings were further buttressed by print media—magazines like *Northeast Sun* and later on *The Record* were regularly featuring popular Western rock bands<sup>140</sup> in their monthly issue. To make these magazines more attractive/saleable, each issue also had the posters of popular bands and musicians—which became a stable decoration in the walls of many of their homes. Along with that, collections of small booklets containing guitar chords and tabs of popular rock and pop songs further impelled the interest of many young Hao-Tangkhul boys—to pick up a guitar and learn the songs of their favorite bands.

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<sup>139</sup> The first known Hao-Tangkhul audio album was released in 1985. It was titled as *Zingtai Mansingla*, and was produced by *Zingtai Mansingla Film company*, which was till then known as *8 Starclub*, a Hao-Tangkhul theatre group from Mapao-Zingsho village.

<sup>140</sup> The feature in these magazines also covered contemporary popular musicians besides rock bands.

In the interim, Hao-Tangkhul social practices like *Meisum kapam* and young boys' *adda* gatherings were still very prominent. Even as the guitar was a pervasive presence in contemporary popular music, the guitar was also firmly rooted in these local social practices. So, to a certain extent both these aspects fed on each other: the popularity of the guitar in popular musical styles led to further appropriation of the guitar by more Hao-Tangkhul youth; concurrently, the pervasive presence of the guitar in their social practices and musicking piqued the interest of the youth in bands and musicians where the guitar had a visible and audible prominence.

By this time, the guitar had also been thoroughly and massively incorporated in Hao-Tangkhul musical practices in the religious domain. As a matter of fact, the guitar was already the most widely used musical instrument in their worship. Unlike its 'questionable' place in the early days, the guitar's appropriateness in the context of worship was now a given. Concomitantly, with the guitars' inscription in their religious practice, it became a musical instrument which permeated every aspects of the Hao-Tangkhuls music culture.

### **(iii) Conclusion**

As of today, the guitar is still the most pervasive musical instrument in their socializing and musicking. In their social gatherings and religious practices, the guitar continues to occupy a ubiquitous presence. However, the guitar's social life is not as vibrant as it was in the past. The presence of guitar in public spaces has steadily decreased along with the decline of many of Hao-Tangkhul social practices. This change is likely entailed by the changing conditions of Hao-Tangkhul society—particularly, the migration of the youth to metropolitan cities; as well as the increasing individualization and changing forms of sociality and socialization shaped to a large extent by the accessibility of new technologies. In the cities that many of their youth have migrated to, their social practices of *Meisum kapam* and social gatherings in the evening cannot be enacted as it could be done at home—as the various occupations that they are engaged in, the diverse communities that they live within, and the different social settings of these new places have changed the dynamics of their socialization. Even in their own home town and villages, increasing electrification and easier accessibility of media technologies has entailed new forms of socialization

which doesn't necessarily always have to be face-to-face encounters—thus reducing the extent of ubiquitous presence of the guitar which their socialization in the past enabled.

Along with that, even in the global music circuit with the rise of electronic dance music and hip-hop, guitar no longer has the kind of prominence that it enjoyed in the past. This is reflected in the musicking of the Hao-Tangkhul youth too. With the increasing variety of music genres that the youth are accessing, the guitar is now not the only musical instrument that they yearn for. Musical instruments like the piano (especially amongst the girls) and the violin are gaining more acceptance.<sup>141</sup> That being said, along with the eclectic musical influences afforded by new technologies and media platforms, there is definitely a richer variety of guitar music in their musical practices—which is partially yielded by the increasing the number of versatile Hao-Tangkhul guitar players. In the present actualities of their society, especially the improved economic condition and the possibility of higher aspirations amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, many of them can now accommodate formal guitar lessons, as well as access latest modern sound equipment which would have been accessible in their past conditions. Consequently, influencing the soundscape of their guitars, as well as their larger musicking.

In conclusion, one can sum up the history of the guitar amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls as a narrative of the varying intersections of the lives of Hao-Tangkhuls along with the various “scapes” of media, ethno, and technology, at different point in time (Appadurai op. cit). It is a varying indigenization of a global musical instrument within their own evolving context—a process of yielding a “glocal” musical instrument (Dawe 2013). And it is this simultaneously “locally-rooted” existence amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls and “globally-mobile existence” of the guitar which not only yields the dynamic interplay of local and global forces but also the significance of the guitar *per se*, not just amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, but in the global musical culture (Dawe 2013).

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<sup>141</sup> Even in the past, besides the guitar, many other musical instruments were already adopted in their musical practices. But unlike in the past years in the present context the no. of youth formally learning these musical instruments are much more.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

#### **The Pivotal Period: A Revisitation**

Jameson commenting on Attali's work noted that in most of Attali's writings, there is a "common focus and a common problematic"—the sense that something new is emerging all around us. A new economic order in which new forms of social relations can be discerned in the interstices of the old, and of which new forms of cultural production can often yield the most precious symptoms, if not the prophetic annunciation (Jameson 2011).

As Jameson remarked, in *Noise* (2011), it is music through which Attali propounds to perceive the new world that is emerging. He venerates music as a *mirror* of the society—"a way of perceiving the world, a tool of understanding" (Attali 2011, 4). That "music runs parallel to human society, is structured like it, and changes when it does—caught up in the complexity and circularity of the movements of history" (Attali 2011, 10). At the same time, he asserts that music is even *prophetic* of the times to come—that throughout history the changes in the character of music foreshadowed structural evolutions in political and economic structures of the society—providing "a rough sketch of the society under construction" (Attali 2011, 5).

Contextualizing this approach of Attali within the context of the Hao-Tangkhus, it would be judicious to state that their musicking do reflect the changing narratives of their society, if not the "prophetic annunciation" as Jameson remarked. From the status of sovereign village republics in the past to their encounter with Colonial power, and to the present, where their lives are entrenched with the tide of the socio-economic and political reality of the global world—their musicking have also undergone a massive transformation, along with these changing realities. Tracing from the late nineteenth century when Hao-Tangkhus traditional music was still vibrant, to the present context where one can observe pluralistic co-existence of several musical styles, one can assert that there had been a transformation in the "musical system" (Blacking 1977) of the Hao-Tangkhus along with their changing actualities. This transformation was not just an alteration of few elements of their musical style or addition of new music in their musical



paraphernalia, but it was an adoption of a musical system in which the conception and production of music itself had altered drastically. From an entirely oral based musical system where the longevity of a song depended on the collective memory and the need for the song in their society, to an inculcation of a musical approach where songs are retained regardless of the necessity of a collective purpose. The addition of sight in the form of written tonic-sol-fa, staff notation and written words in a culture where music learning and singing was entirely based on vocalization and hearing. A leap from a mode of retaining songs through mnemonic patterns and a variable approach to performing songs with standard or key thematic settings ( Ong 2002), to a thorough appropriation of written and audio records in their musicking—introducing an element of fixity and permanence of music (relatively). These technologies of storing, producing and reproducing songs partially or entirely through written text and audio (audio-visual) recordings have also introduced elements of disembodied musical production in their society—a separation of the songs from the living present, where alone songs or words can exist (Ong 2002)—which was unlike their traditional musical practices in the past, when their musicking was always live—“through the physical presence of musicking humans” (Hogg 2012, 219).

Taking into cognizance such drastic changes one can assert that there has been a huge transformation of “music-making process” (Blacking 1977), experiencing music performance and cognitive conception of musicking, from what it was a century ago, to the present. As detailed in the earlier chapters, these drastic changes in their musical system can be traced initially from the late nineteenth century, with the introduction of Western musical style—the singing of hymns—inculcated by the Western Christian missionaries. In their intentional introduction of a new musical style which was deemed the ‘appropriate’ music for Christian faith, a new conception of experiencing or rather practices of musicking, was initiated, as a corollary. With the mission of proselytizing the Hao-Tangkhuls, they or rather Rev. William Pettigrew (primarily) introduced writing amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls as one of his key tasks, so that they could read the Bible, as well as the hymns, in their own language (Solo & Mahangthei 2006). This use of written hymnals, then—the lyrics as well as the tonic sol-fa—was an entirely new mode of music practice for the Hao-Tangkhuls, where, for the first time in their known history of musicking, the sound of words or rather music, was rendered visually. Such addition of written material

was a drastic alteration in Hao-Tangkhuls' ontological conceptions of musical practice. Written words shaped a new form of musical practice where the rendering and retention of songs had an element of rigidity and permanence, unlike the traditional approach where the rendition of a song was variable in each performance, as long as the key theme is maintained—correspondingly resulting in retention of songs which didn't have the kind of permanence and fixity that writing brought. Further, in their traditional musical practice, transmission and retention of songs were based on the collective memory of the people and the need of that particular song in their society. But with written words, there came a possibility of retaining songs for the sake of itself and not necessarily with a functional purpose for the entire community. Writing also introduced the attachment of individual identity with a song, in complete opposition to their traditional musical practice where songs even in spite of being originated from an individual, was shaped, retained and collectively identified with a clan or a village.

Perhaps, it can be suggested that to some degree, the adoption of writing was a disruption of Hao-Tangkhuls' aged conception of "*Laa hi channa, chan hi laana* (Songs they are words, words they are songs). As Ong asserted, "Restriction of words to sound determines not only modes of expression but also thought processes" (Ong 2002, 33).

But the impact of such foundational alteration in their music was still minuscule (at this point), as this new mode of musicking was confined mainly to Western musical styles (particularly hymns) and not to their traditional music. Along with the Western hymns, simultaneously, there was a pluralistic coexistence of their traditional musical practice (without adopting written text). To a certain extent one can imply that it was a "musical compartmentalization" (Kartomi 1981) (Merriam 1964) of different musical styles and mode of musicking—Western hymns, along with a written text, for Christian worship and the continuation of the oral Hao-Tangkhul traditional musical practice in other domains of their life. But this compartmentalization is not neatly the same as what Merriam (1964) and Kartomi (1981) wrote about—where an individual or a community are skilled in both musical styles of their own, as well as of other cultures but do not mix the two. In the context of Hao-Tangkhuls, it was a case where the Christian converts are steadily letting go of their traditional music in their everyday lives as they adopt more of Western Christian hymns in their worship—consequentially not only adopting a new musical style but also

accommodating a new mode of musicking—use of written text. But for the non-Christians, it was solely the continuation of their traditional oral music without adopting the Western hymns which were aided by “the technology of writing” (Clancy 1979) (Ong 2002).<sup>142</sup>

Another sound technology whose initial advent amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls can be traced to their encounters with Christianity and Colonialism (which facilitated the arrival of Christianity), was the gramophone. As mentioned in the preceding chapters, the gramophone along with Bible rolls and the Magic lanterns was first brought along by Rev. William Pettigrew in his missionary work amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls—to facilitate the process of proselytization (Solo & Mahangthei 2006). Through these technologies the sight and sound of the new religion came to be popularized; the Western songs and musical style played through the gramophone became the “legitimate sounds of Christianity” (Thomas 2016, 31).<sup>143</sup>

Even though the accessibility to gramophone was minimal in its initial introduction and was owned by only a few amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls even at a later stage, the gramophone dawned the realization of a disembodied musicking amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls. It was a technology which foreshadowed a mode of musicking (enabled through new technologies) which would completely transform the system and scale of their musical practices—affecting even their ways of socialization and sociability of the people in the community. But these changes in their musical practices did not occur solely as a result of the agencies of these technologies or just by the act of the introduction of these technologies per se. (As detailed in chapter 2 and above) Rather, the adoption of these technologies was concurrent with, and was made possible, primarily by the changes in Hao-Tangkhul polity, social institutions, religion and economy (to some extent)—which was catalysed by the intervention of the Western Christian missionaries and British colonials: conversion into a new faith and the subsequent decrease of their religion (beliefs); erosion of their aged authorities and political independence; the death of Longshim, and its concomitant result of delinking the bridge between the younger generation and the ways

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<sup>142</sup> Even in the present context, musical compartmentalization can be implied for the elderly Hao-Tangkhuls who sing hymns in the church but still do sing their traditional songs at their leisure time, or in festive occasions of the Hao-Tangkhuls.

<sup>143</sup> Besides the Christian missionaries, as a result of the new actualities brought about by the intervention of British colonials—the flow of goods and human movements in their hills and beyond—through soldiers, administrators, traders etc.—the gramophone was further popularized.

of their forefathers-mothers; increasing dependence on monetary goods; introduction of new occupations, and so on.

All of these factors ultimately amounted in the devaluation of their culture and *Self*—in the long run disrupting and altering the aged *habitus* of their society—the “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” (Bourdieu 1980, 53)—which had been produced by the conditionings associated with the “conditions of existence” of the Hao-Tangkhul lives, over the ages. And in these changes, the Church and School had a tremendous influence. These institutions modulated new forms of social relations, social structures, expectations, and aspirations—steadily structuring structures compatible with their changing conditions (Bourdieu 1984, 1992). Simultaneously, these institutions sanctioned the transmission of new “cultural capital” (Bourdieu 1986), all the while when hereditary transmission of the traditional “cultural capital” of the Hao-Tangkhuls declined, with their changed actualities. The new cultural capitals—reading, writing, Western music (hymns), etc., thus became symbolic expressions of being a part of the new world or the new *Self* that was being imagined and constructed within themselves and by the missionaries and British Colonials. Contemporaneously, their traditional music which was an essential cultural capital in the past, was now not necessarily a “useful cultural capital” (Bourdieu 1986, 246) which merits the extent of “labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally” (Bourdieu 1986, 244) and as a community—of what was (essential) in the past.

One can also imply that this phenomenon was made possible as a result of shifts in power amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls (entailed by Colonialism and Christianity) from the previous incumbent traditional powers wielders such as aged elders, village priest (in the traditional sense), warriors, etc., to missionaries, Church elders, School teachers and youth, especially in the early phase of Christian conversion. For these new authorities amongst them, (when it comes to music) Western hymns became the essential cultural capital that needed incorporation, inculcation, and assimilation in their society, rather than their traditional music. Singing hymns was identified as a symbolic expression of being a Christian; it also functioned as a “symbolical capital”—which is needed in the new forms of sociality and social relationships that Christianity and Colonialism had engendered.

Thus, resulting in the promotion, if not social sanctioning of hymns as the useful music in their altered social conditions.

Considering all these aforementioned structural changes, at the risk of essentializing, one can term the encounters with Christianity and Colonialism as the pivotal period that not only significantly transformed the Hao-Tangkhul musical practices at that point in time, but the impact of the changes they entailed had initiated and to some extent heralded the prospective changes that were to come about and had occurred in Hao-Tangkhul musical practices, over the years.

### **(Re) Purposing of Music—Negotiating (Collective) Identities**

In the contemporary musical practices of the Hao-Tangkhuls, one can observe the classification of musical styles in their live musicking. But this is not necessarily regarding the quality of music; rather, it is a compartmentalization of music based on its functionality in everyday life. This is quite apparent in their musicking of hymns and that of their traditional music. As mentioned above, with the conversion of Hao-Tangkhuls to Christianity, there had been a shift in the conceptualization of Western hymns as the useful cultural capital in their society, at the expense of marginalizing their traditional music. This conditioning over the years has led to the present state where on the functional level, hymns are valued as essential in their everyday lives of the community—in their religious practices and beyond. They are deemed as necessary cultural capital—“an organic, a living aspect of public life” (Frith 2012,151)—and are thus institutionally and socially incorporated, inculcated and nurtured—through and in—their congregational singing in the church; the music camps organized by the Church and their religious organizations; worship in the confines of their homes, and so on. This entrenched position of hymns (in their society) is to such an extent that in their religious practice (especially in their congregational singing), the place for any other styles of music is minimal. In fact, incorporating other styles of music in their congregational singing are hardly thought of. This conception is not confined to the elderly Hao-Tangkhuls alone, but even amongst the youth, there is a sense of comfort with the established tradition of singing hymns in their religious practice. There is a sense of reluctance even when it comes to the notion of incorporating their traditional music in the domain of Christian worship. This phenomenon

can perhaps be accounted with the *habitus* that had been engendered by the conditionings of their society. The present Hao-Tangkhuls, primarily the youth, were born into a practice where hymns were and have been the primary form of music in their worship. It is this music with which they have grown up and are growing with—as the music or the *sound of their religion*—to a large extent, if not entirely. So, the sense of attachment or the disposition to find comfort in hymns (in their religious practice) can be traced to the “anticipations of the habitus”—which has been shaped by their past experiences—“in accordance with the schemes generated by history” (Bourdieu 1992, 54). As Bourdieu asserted:

Habitus, a product of history...ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action tend to guarantee the ‘correctness’ of practices and their constancy over time (Bourdieu 1992,54).

Concurrently, the Hao-Tangkhuls (primarily the youth) also had no or little (prior) experience of acquiring, experiencing and appreciating the aesthetics and significance of their traditional music—resulting in a situation where the acceptance of their traditional music is—as remnants of or index to “a way of life that is no longer available...a way of living (that) is now gone forever” (Appadurai 1997,76), and thus no longer necessarily a music to be engaged in everyday life’s purposes. In the ongoing repurposing of music, this has led to a transference in the function of their traditional music. As George List noted, “A musical style no longer serving a particular social and economic function is not discarded but is adapted and utilized instead in fulfilling another socially approved function” (List 1994,19). Hence, the Hao-Tangkhul traditional music is now performed (preserved) as a representative symbol in official functions, festivals and occasions, where the purpose of musicking is to assert their distinctive identity—in (re) constituting a ‘Self’ of their community—for themselves and in relation to other ethnic identities. They are thus valued as “emblems of (their) communal identity” (Abels 2008, 228) but not necessarily incorporated in everyday life’s purposes.

The hierarchy of music in the sense of the preference of one music over the other, based on its quality—that one is better than the other, can be implied in the musicking of the youth—in the context of Hao-Tangkhul popular songs and other musical styles or genre, produced elsewhere. Especially among the teenagers, there are views that Hao-

Tangkhul pop songs lack artistic standard, sound quality, and variety of musical genre, in comparison with the music they are used to listening to. That, after listening to music produced elsewhere, especially Western popular music, Hao-Tangkhul songs “sounds pale,” “lacking in quality,” “boring,” “unpleasant to listen to,” “too sentimental,” and so on. Besides, given the ample choice of music that they can avail through various sources—friends, the internet, etc.—Hao-Tangkhul pop songs occupy less priority and listening time in their everyday musicking. However, in spite of acknowledging the alleged ‘lower’ musical quality of Hao-Tangkhul songs, there are also youths who still choose to include Hao-Tangkhul pop songs in their playlist, as it is their “own music.” For these youths, listening to Hao-Tangkhul pop songs—old songs as well as contemporary—becomes more than an act of listening to music but an act of identifying, participating and keeping updated with the popular culture of their society. This is especially prominent amongst Hao-Tangkhuls who have migrated to other places, in the present, or at some point in time. For them, Hao-Tangkhul pop music becomes a means or resource to retain a relationship with the home that they have left behind. In the new places that they inhabit, musicking with Hao-Tangkhul songs—in the confines of their homes or workplace, in their friends get-together, in the shops that they run in alleys of these new places, etc.—becomes an act of nostalgic remembrance of their home, as well as establishing or (re) constituting their “territory”—a sense of belonging, comfort and safety (Witchel 2010).

Thermila, a young woman who pursued her designing course in Delhi, and now who has set up her own shop in Ukhrul, remarked as such:

In the past, I would rarely listen to Hao-Tangkhul pop songs. But during my stay in Delhi, I was missing home a lot. So to comfort myself, as I reminisce about the days in my hometown, I began listening to Hao-Tangkhul popular songs of Thangmeiso, Singrala and the old songs of Remnu too.

This phenomenon is not confined to just individual acts, but even as a community, there are attempts to establish and retain their “imagined community” (Anderson 1983), in the metropolitan cities of India that they have migrated to (such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, etc.)—through organizing *Lungchān Laa competitions* (Hao-Tangkhul pop song contest) in their festivals and social gatherings. There is a conscious attempt to (re) construct and sustain the cultural memories of their community through the musicking of

Hao-Tangkhul pop songs—which had been engendered over the years, in the socialization and musicking of their community.

Viewed in the light of what Frith (1992) pointed out—that music both creates and articulates the very idea of community—perhaps, one can assert that all these attempts of listening, performing, or partaking Hao-Tangkhul pop songs, might be construed as a statement of acknowledging, as well as sustaining a collective identity—as Hao-Tangkhuls—in the midst of the many communities that they live amongst, and the many imagined identities in their individual lives. These acts of associating with their collective identity (even beyond their homes), or the increasing complexity of the imaginings of collective identities, can be better understood in the light of their music practice in the past, and the intersections of the influence of migration and mediated experiences, largely through electronic media.

As mentioned in the first chapter, (in the past) the Nagas' (Hao-Tangkhul) way of life was largely governed by the conception of the *community over the individual*. Naga people knew no other life except that of community life. All things were done in groups and in the full presence of the entire community. The individual had no existence apart from the community (Shimray 1985). This was a worldview which permeated in every aspect of their life. Concomitantly, the practices of their music was a way of living this worldview. It wasn't "a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them" (Frith.1992, 111). As such, in their musicking, the individual self had its expression only in the collective expression of the community. This is not in the sense that the individual didn't have a voice of their own, or the space to musically express themselves as an individual; rather, the assertion is that the legitimacy or the meaning of a person's musical expression were empowered in the contextual framework of their collective musical practice. An individual's musical expression or musicking was made possible through the common musical idiom of the community. Possibly, as a result of this underpinning of their worldview (musicking), no songs were credited or identified with an individual, rather, only collectively—of a clan or a village; and so was the existence and longevity of a song, or the musical expressions of an individual, contingent on the collective appropriation and need of the community. Viewed through that prism, one can thus imply that it was only as



a collective identity that they could musically express themselves—it was a collective musicking as their collective life entailed.

Significantly, their musicking was also always live music, but as “live music is music as an aspect of a social situation...it is an organic, a living aspect of public life” (Frith 2012, 151). So, the sense of collective musicking, which is an essential characteristic of Hao-Tangkhul traditional music practice, was to a certain degree, even occasioned by this very nature of live musicking that they practiced. Their musicking always entailed the physical presence of a human embodied performance. Consequently, this mode of music practice governed a certain mode of musicking and imagining which is conditioned in the immediate collective need, possibilities, and conditions of their community. The framework for their imaginings was thus limited by the conditionings of their society.

But in the contemporary context, this possibility of self-imagining is on a much larger frame—made possible by new resources and cultural flows—entailed by the intersections of the various “scapes” as Appadurai delineated—ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes (Appadurai 1997). Yet, as mentioned earlier, the migration of Hao-Tangkhuls beyond their hills, became one of the factors in making their youth assert and (re) constitute their collective identity—to (re) connect and sustain their musicking culture—the shared cultural memories engendered in the history of their musical practice. But in this context, it is through Hao-Tangkhul popular songs,<sup>144</sup> and not their traditional music, with which a collective music practice is being sustained, especially amongst the youth. This is beside the collective musicking of hymns, in their religious practice—in the larger Hao-Tangkhul society. So, the conception of collective musicking is thus still prevalent, though not necessarily in the same mode of the musicking of their traditional music, in the past. However, in the present context, this collective music practice is not confined with their own Hao-Tangkhul identity. Even as migration became a push factor in asserting their collective identity, at the same time, migration has also diversified

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<sup>144</sup> Hao Tangkhul Pop songs or popular songs is a reference to songs which are produced by Hao-Tangkhuls in their own language, in the fashion of Western musical styles. Such songs are primarily love songs and of pop genre. The initial beginning of this pop culture can be traced from the 1960s onwards, when Hao-Tangkhuls were exposed to Hindi film songs; Western Country, Pop and Rock music—through radio, gramophone records, movie theatres and also through their travels to cities like Shillong, Guwahati, etc. This was the time when the guitar was also gaining popularity amongst them. The narrative of this aspect of their music culture has been detailed in the third chapter, especially in the section, ‘Hindi film songs’ and ‘Guitar culture in the hills of the Hao-Tangkhul Nagas.’

their social relations and the possibilities of identifying with and imagining other collective identities—beyond their ethnicity. Migration of many of Hao-Tangkhul youth to cities like Delhi, Bangalore, Mumbai, etc., and even abroad, have changed the dynamics of their sociality, as well the nature of their social relations. Their social networks are now extended to many other identities who share similar taste and interest in music, worldview, etc.—and not confined to their own ethnic social identity.

In Delhi, there are now Hao-Tangkhul youths who identify and are actively associated with musicians and proponents of Western classical music—in organizing and performing Western classical music recitals and even actively pursuing Western classical music training. For young Hao-Tangkhul girls who are ardent lovers Korean pop music (culture), moving into cities like Delhi and Bangalore have opened up more possibilities of being a part of Korean pop culture—along with K-pop fans from the rest of the country. They no longer just get to listen to their favorite bands (Big Bang, MFBTY, AOMG, etc.), as they did in their hometown and villages. In these cities, they even get to attend the live performances of Korean pop songs<sup>145</sup> in Korean festivals and Korean pop contest, organized by ‘Korean Cultural Centre India.’ Besides the musical performance, they get to meet these Korean pop bands and get their autographs and hugs—the larger cultural experience of being a Korean pop fan. For instance, Mingyaochon, a 22 years old student who is currently pursuing M.A. in Korean Language, at Jawaharlal Nehru University, has been listening to Korean-pop music since she was in her 6<sup>th</sup> standard in school. She narrated that her first exposure to K-pop music began with watching Korean serials on *Arirang* Channel<sup>146</sup> and later on through the pirated Korean pop music CD/DVD albums which were abundantly available in her local CD/DVD rental/seller shops, in Ukhrul. Since then she has been “hooked” on Korean pop music and TV serials. CD of these songs and serials she would exchange amongst her friend circle—at times, even in the classroom—placed in between their textbooks. Additionally, the craze for K-pop bands was such that she and her

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<sup>145</sup> So far, these performances in India are primarily covers as well as original songs by lesser known K-pop bands, as well as by K-pop fans from India.

<sup>146</sup> Arirang TV is a popular English-language Korean television channel operated by Korean International Broadcasting Foundation.

friends religiously collected posters<sup>147</sup> of K-pop bands, especially boy bands. Further, they would ape the fashion culture in these music videos and films; follow the updates of their favorite bands; learn snippets of Korean phrases, and so on. This fascination with Korean pop music/culture was transformed into a larger experience, in her stay in Delhi. Recalling one of her early experience of attending a live Korean pop music performance, she humorously remarked:

When ‘N-Sonic’ came to perform in Delhi (in a Korean festival), me and my friends came back with sore throats because of all the screaming during the musical performance. We took their pictures and autographs after the performance. On top of that one of my cousin sister was so excited that she even broke one chair while grooving during the concert.

Similarly, many youths are now a part of, and are finding new spaces to identify (express themselves) with groups who share similar taste in musical styles and outlook—either in college, workplace, in a bar, music festivals, etc. However, these possibilities of identifying themselves with other “community of sentiment—a group that begins to imagine and feels things together” (Appadurai 1997, 8), is not just as a result of migration. Rather, such associations had been initiated by mediated experiences, much before migration could expand the mode of these social relations. Irrespective of where they were, and are now located (whether in a city or a village), increasing accessibility to an extensive paraphernalia of media technologies and the resultant permeation of cultural flows, have made the framework of their imagined worlds expand much beyond their homes. Mediated experiences, particularly through electronic media had (still) played a “central and constitutive role” (Giddens 1991) in the negotiations of their self-identity and the basic organization of their social relations. As Lingur Hungyo<sup>148</sup> narrated:

Punk rock had been (still is) my favorite music genre, in my school days. Punk rock music embodies an image of “a non-conformist,” “a lumkhalao vibe.”<sup>149</sup> Listening to it made me feel empowered and hopeful that even I can make it in this world without conforming to tradition. It was while learning the songs of my favorite bands, like Green Day and Blink 182, that I even began learning the guitar, and at

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<sup>147</sup> In Ukhrul, small post-card sized posters of Korean movie stars and Korean pop bands were either sold by local Cyber café owners or are found in pirated CD/ DVD covers of Korean films and music albums, and even in the form of packaging covers in food products from Myanmar, locally known as *Moreh athei*.

<sup>148</sup> Lingur Hungyo is a 26 years old Hao-Tangkul youth, who is presently staying in Imphal, as he prepares for Indian Central service examinations.

<sup>149</sup> Lumkhalao is a colloquial reference to socially entertaining and fun ambience.

times performed with my friends—in our local social gatherings and school programs...Moreover, these punk rock bands in their T-shirts, half pants, and canvases, was a fashion style that appealed to me and many of my friends.

With the increasing accessibility of digital technologies, these negotiations of identity through musicking—or their musicking—have now expanded to various acts of sharing, communicating and updating oneself and others, through various social networking platforms and audio-video sharing websites, such as Whatsapp, Instagram, YouTube, SoundCloud, Facebook pages, etc. This sharing and interactions are not just about the songs, but it includes the latest updates on the musicians they listen to, finding new musicians, the seasons of television music shows they follow<sup>150</sup> and so on. On top of that, the surge in mobile technology (smartphones) have made these mediations, networking and experiences, a consistent, if not daily ritual. Consequently, there is an “increasingly technologized social life” (Taylor 2001), musicking, and a deterritorialised construction of their imagined worlds and forms of social relations (Appadurai 1997), in their everyday lives. However (simultaneously), the actualities at home also entail identification with their immediate identity and social relations. As mentioned earlier, amongst the youth, in their hills or in the different cities they have migrated to, there is a constant identification with their Hao-Tangkhul identity, even as their imaginings and associations are on a much larger framework. As a result, their musical practice (of the youth) is an act of imagining oneself globally (is itself even lived actualities), while also being rooted in their ethnicity. Besides, the possibilities of a deterritorialized imagined worlds afforded by these mobile and global technologies, at the same time, has also extended the reach and opportunities of Hao-Tangkhuls to continue a collective musicking,<sup>151</sup> irrespective of the varied locations that many of the youth now inhabit. In fact, online media platforms are now one of the primary sources of connecting with music that is produced amongst them. Hao-Tangkhul musicians and aspiring musicians are now increasingly employing online distribution-sharing media platforms to put out their original songs, as well as covers of popular Western songs. Minute of Decay, an all-female Hao-

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<sup>150</sup> The Voice, American Idol, America’s got talent, Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, etc.

<sup>151</sup> This collective musicking is not necessarily always in the sense of live music, but it also a reference to a musical practice that encompass composing, listening, sharing and interacting amongst themselves, through various media platforms, irrespective of where an individual is physically located. This musicking is neither confined to Hao-Tangkhul pop songs.

Tangkhul Indie band, promoted their single “Little Betsy” mainly on social media and video sharing sites. So has Theithei sold her latest album *Kongthei* through SoundCloud. Echoes Enterprise,<sup>152</sup> the organizers of *The New Voice*,<sup>153</sup> had also made all the stages of the competition available on YouTube—from the beginning of the audition videos to competing performances in front of a crowd.<sup>154</sup>

In addition, many of the Hao-Tangkhul pop songs which were recorded on cassette tapes are now steadily being digitalized, resulting in a form of resurrection of the classic Hao-Tangkhul pop songs—finding new listeners amongst the younger Hao-Tangkhuls. Consequently, these songs are again performed in their social gatherings and Lungchān laa competitions—in their hills and the new places that they’ve migrated to. On top of that, Hao-Tangkhul pop culture is getting a new boost, with the steady revival of their nascent film industry which had almost ceased since the 1990s. Digital technologies have relatively made it easier for aspiring film-makers to produce films within their community. These new films are screened not just in their hometowns, but even in cities like Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai, as the diaspora of Hao-Tangkhuls are steadily increasing in these places.<sup>155</sup> The increase in film production yields more Hao-Tangkhul pop songs, and as all the latest songs are digital, it has easy accessibility and wide presence. As Nowak noted, “digital technologies contribute in the increasing presence of music...in everyday life” (Nowak 2016, 20).

In conclusion, it is also worth mentioning that with all the collective musicking amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls and also with other “communities of sentiment” being expanded in different forms (by digital technologies), one cannot negate the increasingly

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<sup>152</sup> Echoes Enterprise is the brainchild of Soreichan Nakhedei. The organization besides organizing *The New Voice* also runs a music school in Ukhrul, under the name ‘Echoes School’.

<sup>153</sup> ‘The New Voice’ is a singing competition in Ukhrul which is modelled on popular international reality TV shows, such as ‘The Voice’, ‘American Idol’, etc.

<sup>154</sup> Recently, Home Shimray, a resident in Germany, even participated in ‘The Voice, Germany’ (2017). The audio-visuals of his performances in the competition was widely shared amongst the Hao-Tangkhuls, and there was a strong lobby through various Hao-Tangkhul Facebook pages, Whatsapp groups, as well as personal phone calls—to vote for him, on the ‘The Voice, Germany’ online voting site. He was eliminated from the competition in the ‘Battle round’.

<sup>155</sup> In fact, most of the latest films that had been released in the past few years had their first screening in the city, rather than in their hometown. This probably had to do with the fact that the diaspora of Hao-Tangkhuls in the cities, with a huge strength of working adults (with relative financial wealth), have more financial freedom and means to spend a few hundreds or thousands, to experience a Hao-Tangkhul film on a big screen. On top of that such movie screening also becomes one of the few occasions in a metropolitan city, where they can socialize in huge numbers.

personalized activity of listening to music. Mobile technologies, especially Smartphones, has expanded the possibilities of listening to music in one's own space, choice and time—and with individual interpretations, memories, histories, and tastes. But that being the case, even when listening to music singly, music still connects people in imagined communities and imagined communions—with other listeners who have heard it, are hearing it or will hear it (Jones 2011). The notion of a communal experience is consciously or unconsciously a presence. So, despite the existence of “personalized soundscape” (Avdeeff 2011), the collective cannot be negated. And in the case of the Hao-Tangkhuls, as affiliations to their customary social ties of clans, village and the larger Hao-Tangkhul and Naga identity is still a strong sentiment, the sense of collectivity is a very prominent actuality even in the midst of increasing individualization, in everyday life. Though not in the same sense of collective musicking in the past, transformed conceptions and practices of collective music practice is a reality, in the present context. Though how long will such collective practice sustain and in what ways it will transform, is a deliberation that only time can yield. As referential frameworks for imaginings multiply, the boundaries and possible configuration of collective identities are also expanding—so is the possibility of weakening or strengthening their identity as Hao-Tangkhuls. But as Frith observed, music constructs our identity, which is mobile—“a process not a being, a becoming not a being”—Hao-Tangkhul musicking is an experience of this *self-in-process* (Frith 1996).

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## APPENDIX



Fig.1. Terraced rice fields in Ukhrul.  
Photo Credit: Kahorpam Horam.

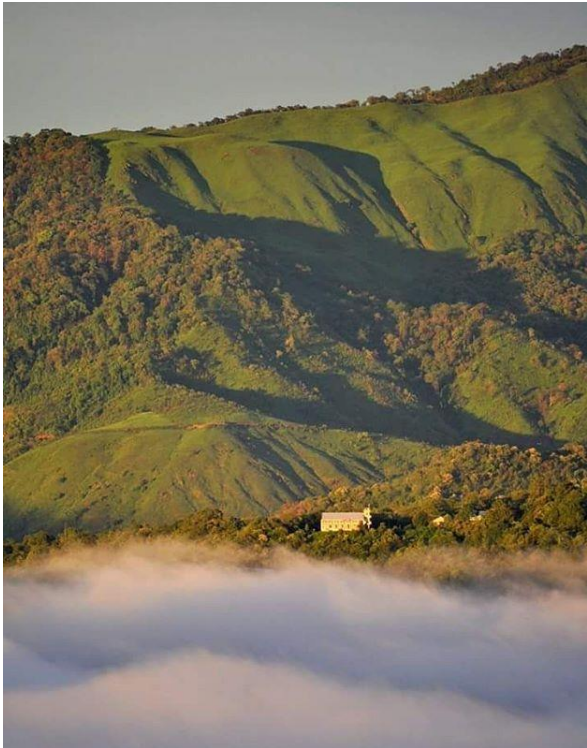


Fig.2. A Hao-Tangkhul Church with the backdrop of Shirui Kashong (Peak), Ukhrul.



Fig.3. Phungyo Baptist Church, Ukhrul—the first church of the Hao-Tangkhuls.

Photo Credit: Kahorpam Horam.





Fig. 4. Candle light service at KUICHAN Bible Camp, 2016, Pilgrims' Prayer Mountain, Hungpung—organized by Union Baptist Church, Ukhrul. Photo Credit: Pamyo Chamroy



Fig.5. Manipur Baptist Convention Quinquennial Congress, 2015, Ukhrul.

Fig.6. Two elderly Hao-Tangkul playing talla—MBC Quinquennial Congress, 2015, Ukhrul. Photo Credit: Kahorpam Horam.



Figure 7. Wungramso Raman performing a Western Classical piece at Instituto Cervantes, New Delhi.

Photo Credit: Wungramyao Kasom

Fig. 8. Poster of *Minute of Decay*'s first EP. Photo Credit: M.O.D.



Fig.9. Lungchān Laa Competition, Hao-Tangkul Fresher's Meet, Delhi, 2016.

Photo Credit: Tangkhal Katamnao Long, Delhi (Tangkhal Students' Union Delhi).

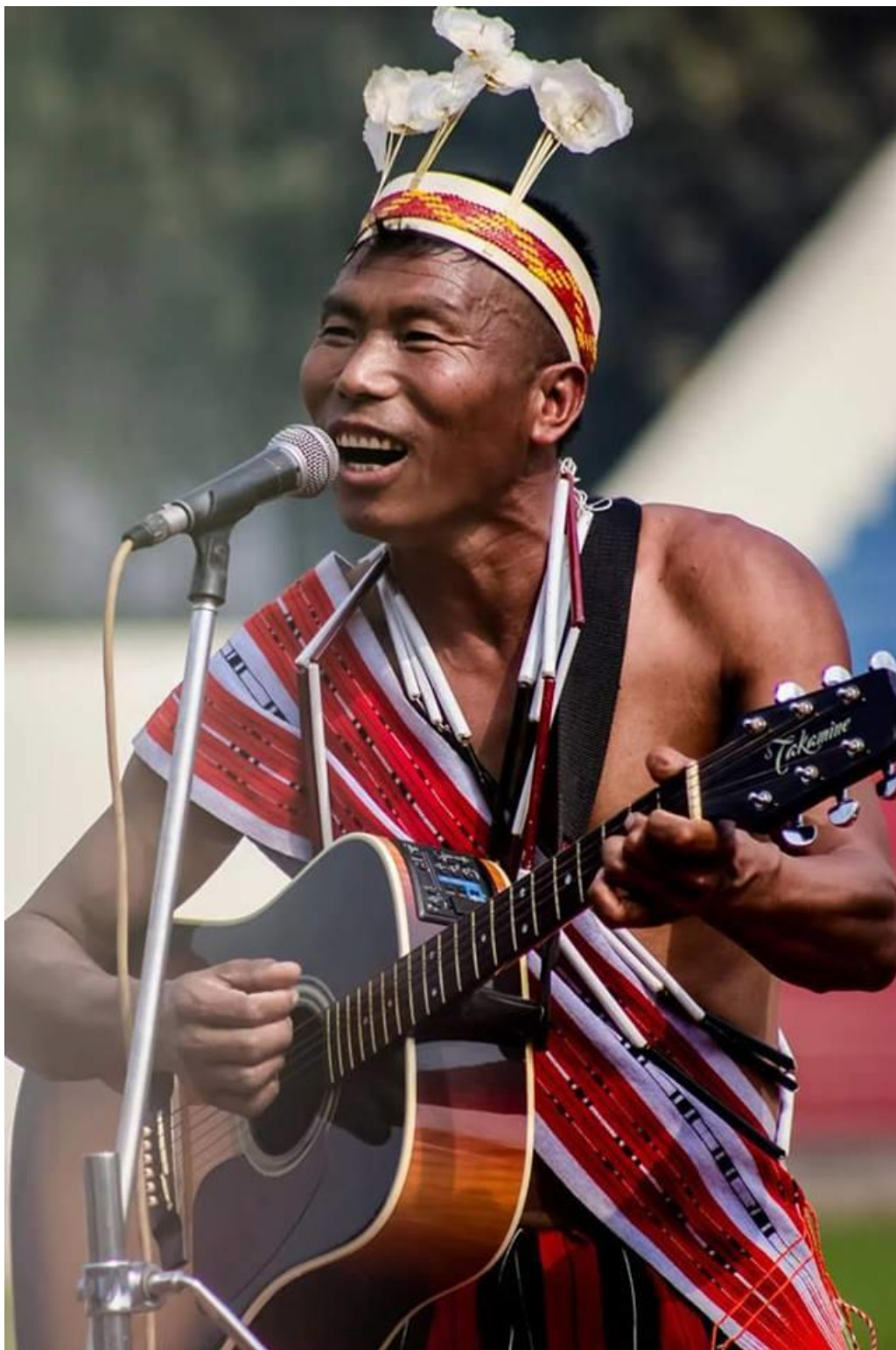


Fig.10. A.S. Rawung singing a Hao-Tangkhu traditional song along with a guitar, —on the occasion of *Laira Phanit* (Seed sowing festival), at Thyagraj stadium, Delhi, 2016. Photo Credit: Tangkhu Katamnao Long, Delhi (Tangkhu Students' Union, Delhi).