

## **Pettigrew's Children: Tracing the History of Print Culture in Tangkhul Language**

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For oral societies, the adoption of written literature signifies an important shift in their modes of communication, recording, and also led to the emergence of literary works. It is important to trace the history of print culture, as we can analysed the process of how new modes of writing began to take shape in a society that was fully dependent on oral communications. This paper will attempt to trace the emergence of written literature among the Tangkhul Naga tribe in Manipur.

**Keywords:** Orality, Written Literature, Tangkhul, Print Culutre

In this paper, the history of print culture of Tangkhul language from its nascent stage to contemporary time will be interrogated. The adoption of written culture by Tangkhuls, who were practicing oral culture during the pre-colonial period, has come to be seen as one of success stories of White missionary's work among the tribes of North East India. Unlike the oral tradition, the records about the emergence of written literature lay scattered across the archives and old missionary records. Even now, no thorough study has been done on the history of print culture of Tangkhul Nagas. The unavailability of most of the printed literary works has also handicapped researchers in this field. Nevertheless, the mission reports submitted by Christian missionaries and local history written by native authors have felicitated in mapping the history of print culture of Tangkhul language.

The appropriation of print culture by Tangkhuls indicates the cultural process, generally experienced by almost all the tribes in North East India, by which a new medium, which literacy theorist called 'technology of writing', for communication and creative expressions have come to dominate the traditional medium. According to Jack Goody the interface between oral and written culture take place in three different modes: (a) 'meeting of cultures with and without writing', (b) interface of written and oral culture in societies that employ writing to a varying degree, and (c) 'the use of writing and speech in the linguistic life of an individual'(Goody 1987: ix). In the historical and cultural context of Tangkhuls, we may draw the analogy that the appropriation of print

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culture by the Tangkhuls from White missionaries was a case of meeting between two different cultures. Print culture was absent among the Tangkhuls, and it began only after the advent of Colonialism and Christian missionaries in their society. However, in understanding the historical context and cultural process through which Tangkhuls have adopted print culture, we also need to keep in mind that ‘written culture’ has no cultural primacy over oral culture, and with the adoption of written culture the oral tradition has not lost its relevance. Walter J Ong has also argued that writing did not reduced orality, but enhanced it by making it “possible to organize the ‘principles’ or constituents of oratory into scientific ‘art’” (Ong 1982: 9). Therefore, instead of assuming that print culture reduced the significance of oral culture, we need to see the extension of traditional arts and the adoption of new technology in the field communication and art. Even after the adoption of print culture the practice and relevance of oral culture remain in literate societies. The history and impact of print culture in Tangkhul society can also be analysed in the aspects of complimentary relations between different modes of cultural practices in society, rather than assuming that print culture and oral culture are poles apart or destroy the significance of one medium or the other.

### **Beginning of Print Culture in Tangkhul Language**

#### *William Pettigrew’s Literary Works in Tangkhul Language*

Rev. William Pettigrew’s *Tangkhul Naga Grammar and Dictionary* written in 1918 remains to this day as one of the most authoritative book on Tangkhul language and it is still relied by almost all the literate Tangkhuls. This book primarily consists of detailed deliberation on Tangkhul language, which was written in English, and also contains dictionary of Tangkhul words translated into English. And, it was the first book that highlights the grammatical rules of Tangkhul language. Although, recent studies on Tangkhul language have highlighted certain flaws in Pettigrew’s formulation of Tangkhul language, there has been no major published work on Tangkhul language. However, if we look deeper into the contribution of Rev. William Pettigrew to Tangkhul language it exceeds far beyond the reduction of oral language into written culture. One of the distinctive characteristics of Tangkhul tribe has been linguistic diversity, where every village has its own dialect. Although, people from one village could comprehend the dialects of neighbouring villages, the dialects of far flung areas remains difficult to understand. In such a situation, choosing a particular dialect as the common language for the entire tribes must have been a difficult task. In *Preface to Tangkhul Naga Grammar and Dictionary*, Rev. William Pettigrew (1918) also mentioned that:

in this tribe [Tangkhuls] it can be truly said that almost every village...has its separate dialect. Ukhrul, the most important and influential village of the tribe, having been decided upon, in 1896, as the headquarters of the Mission, its dialect has been reduced to writing, and this Grammar only professes to be an investigation of that dialect. The policy of bringing in from the surrounding villages suitable students to the Training school at Ukhrul leads the way to a gradual unification of the language.

Given the linguistic diversity of the Tangkhuls, the reduction of Tangkhul dialects into a written language and establishing a common language was a difficult task. However, his idea of forming a 'common language' for all the Tangkhul villages, and using the school as the tool to achieve that goal has been ingenious method. One may also interpret Rev. William Pettigrew's decision to choose the dialect spoken in Ukhrul for transliteration into written script as guided by convenience, since the first mission school and centre was decided upon to be set in Ukhrul.

While describing about the method employed in transliteration of Tangkhul language, Pettigrew (1918: 1) wrote that:

Twenty years ago, when reducing this [Tangkhul] language to writing, I used the Roman characters, and followed Hunterian method of transliteration. Whatever school books and portions of Scriptures we have have been prepared on the above method.

Before the publication of *Tangkhul Grammar and Dictionary*, Rev. William Pettigrew had done massive printing and translation works, not only in Tangkhul language, but also with the languages of other communities like Manipuri. This book, which was written with assistance from Assam Government, seems to be a culmination of all the linguistic works that Rev. Pettigrew had been doing for Tangkhul language. In this book, he has also analysed the close resemblance between Tangkhul language and Manipuri, or considered it as one of the cognates of Manipuri (Ibid: 2). However, in a review of this book, T. C. Hodson (1919: 249-253) wrote that:

A sketch of Tangkhul Naga grammar appeared in vol. iii, pt. ii, of the Linguistic Survey of India, when it was assigned to the Naga Kuki group of the Tibeto-Burman family of Indo-Chinese languages. The classification of these languages in accordance with the sound philology and phonetic principles is a task of considerable magnitude... The author's intimate knowledge of Meitei has enabled him to point to many parallels and similarities. Tangkhul, however, differs from Meitei in its numeric systems and the method of forming the negative, both important characteristics.

Rev. William Pettigrew's intimate knowledge of Meitei and earlier association with it, as T. C. Hodson has remarked, seem to have determined his interest in drawing the similarities between Tangkhul and Meitei language. However, later researchers on Tangkhul language has classified it as a distinct linguistic sub-family as 'Luhupa' in the pantheon of tribal languages in North East India (Matisoff, 1972). He did identify the nuances of Tangkhul language as primarily depended on phonetic principles. The significance of sound in relation to meanings of the words and not strictly on syllables still remain as one of the major issues in Tangkhul language.

When he took up the mission work in Manipur in 1896, Tangkhul was one of the first tribal languages that he had tried to reduce it to writing and printing. He had certain options pertaining to the use of script for Tangkhul language as he had already learnt Bengali and Manipuri; however he preferred to use Roman characters for the school in Ukhrul. In one of the mission reports, Rev. William Pettigrew explains the predicament

that he faced while choosing the script for Tangkhul language.

For the school at Ukhrul it was decided to introduce the Roman character. At first the boys started with a small English primer, and after the primer in their own language was prepared and printed they started on this as well, so that they [could] learn to read and write their own tongue as well as English. Bengali would be of little use to them, so it has been discarded, although it might be worthwhile later on to teach them the character, for the purpose of reading Manipuri, a language they are familiar with.<sup>1</sup>

While carrying out the translation of Gospels into Tangkhul, transliterating Tangkhul language, and preparing school textbooks for school in Ukhrul, Rev. Pettigrew had preferred English and Tangkhul language for Tangkhul students in Ukhrul over other forms of language. The significance of native language as the mode for reading and writing for Tangkhuls had been recognised by Rev. William Pettigrew from the very beginning when Tangkhul primers were prepared for schools. The adoption of native language over other languages of the neighbouring communities has turned out to be a visionary step towards the development of print culture in Tangkhul language. It has also helped the Tangkhuls to write and engaged in literary creativity in their own native language, which has significant impact on the identity formation of the tribe.

Tangkhul language is highly tonal and the usage of Roman character has proved to be a daunting task, both for the writers as well as the readers in this language. By adding two letters, *â* and *â*, to the existing letters of Roman characters, Rev. W. Pettigrew was able to employ Roman characters for Tangkhul language and prepare the written text in Tangkhul. However, even at present, capturing the tonal characters of Tangkhul language by employing the letters and sound of Roman characters remains a problematic issue.

The initial years of Rev. and Mrs. Pettigrew's mission work in Ukhrul were devoted to producing textbooks for schools and publication of Gospels in Tangkhul. Thus, the beginning of print culture in Tangkhul language primarily consists of small textbooks and some translated Gospels. When the Mission School in Ukhrul was established in 1897, there was no Tangkhul textbook to be used for students; therefore, an English textbook called '*Step by Step*' was used as a textbook for students (Shimray & Maransa 1993: 1). After meticulous effort to understand Tangkhul language, Rev. William Pettigrew prepared the First and Second Primer as textbooks for the Mission School in Ukhrul during 1897 and 1898 (Pettigrew, 1899). Even after hundred years of its publication, his book *Tangkhul Primer* is still in use as Tangkhul textbook for primary students in schools.

He also mentioned that help from his elder students in school had been utilised while preparing the first Biblical publication of the Tangkhuls. The *Gospel of Luke* from *The Holy Bible* was the first translated Biblical text to be printed in Tangkhul language in 1902.<sup>2</sup> It is not sure which version of Bible they had employed while translating the scriptures, as such information has not been given, and the printed version of the translated book remains unavailable.

The First and Second Primer in Tangkhul, which Rev. Pettigrew had prepared, were mainly for foundational course for reading and writing in Tangkhul. He, however, mentioned that the Third and Fourth Primer in Tangkhul consist of *Life of Jesus Christ*.

While he seems to be busy in Ukhrul, concentrating mainly on the translation and school work, the printing for these books were done in Calcutta. He had sent series of manuscripts from Ukhrul and also took the consultation of other scholars for his published works, while he kept on producing one book after another.

The first proper hymn book in Tangkhul, *Jesuwui Lâ: Hymns in Tângkhul Nâga*, was published in 1907. Although the main author of this hymn book was Rev. William Pettigrew, he acknowledged the help of his students while preparing this hymnbook.<sup>5</sup> The hymnbook contains 51 translated songs, with proper lyrical verses.<sup>6</sup> However, musical notations were not included with the songs in the first two editions, except the tonal keys. In the third edition of *Jesuwui Laa Lairik* in 1929 which was printed in London, for the first time musical notation Tonic Solfa was included with the hymns in Tangkhul. Going through the text of the hymns, one could find the base for mode of lyrical composition in Tangkhul language was laid down by this hymnbook. Although, there are numerous flaws in words and letters in this hymnbook, there are similarities as well between the present Tangkhul hymnbook and hymns in *Jesuwui Lâ*, which is in terms of lyrical style and some words. The mode of composing songs in lyric or poetic form was not totally new to the Tangkhuls, folksongs are an oral mode of lyrical poetry. However, we can notice the introduction of new modes of song-writing in this hymnbook, which is more attuned to Western poetry and lyrics.

The school textbooks which were prepared by Rev. Pettigrew and his students in Ukhrul School had tremendously contributed to the formation of Tangkhul language and literature. The first students of Rev. W. Pettigrew's Mission School in Ukhrul were not only instrumental in transliteration of Tangkhul language, but also pioneers in various modes of writing. The Tangkhul students of Rev. William Pettigrew who took up the task of writing were: M. K. Shimray, R. K. Luikham, and S. Kanrei (Chiphang 2006: 8-11). The contribution of Rev. William Pettigrew to Tangkhul language, in terms of books and Biblical texts and hymns, are enormous even in today's standard. He had published numerous books in Tangkhul, inclusive school textbooks, hymnals, Bibles, and dictionary, during his 40 years of mission work in Manipur. The titles of his books in Tangkhul, according to Rev C. Kaping, are: (1) *Tangkhul Primer (First and Second)*, (2) *Tanglen Lairik*, (3) *Otshan Lairik*, (4) *Kuipang Lairik*, (5) *Kazat Makharanuda Sakhangachon Lairik (Part 1 & 2)*, (6) *Jesu Khararchan (Part 1 & 2)*, (7) *Matthew (Gospel)*, (8) *Mark (Gospel)*, (9) *Luke (Gospel)*, (10) *John (Gospel)*, (11) *Jesuwui La Lairik*, (12) *New Testament, Tangkhul Naga* (Ibid). The publication of the whole set of *New Testament* in Tangkhul in 1926 appears to be the last publication of Rev. W. Pettigrew in Tangkhul language (Singh 2005: 20-25). Although, he failed to publish the full set of *The Holy Bible*, the task of Bible translation in Tangkhul was initiated and the need of Tangkhul Christians was met in certain aspects. And, as many *Gospels* from the *New Testament* had already published, it was just a matter of time that the full set would appear. Going by the title of books published by him, the *New Testament* in Tangkhul may be considered as a major translation work that had been done by him.

In all these translation and printing works that Rev. W. Pettigrew had taken up in Tangkhul language, his concern seems to have been directed by two major aims: educational and religious purposes. He did succeed in not only giving the Tangkhuls the scripts

for writing, but also make them learnt how to read and write in their own language and English. Moreover, the spread of Christianity in Tangkhul was also aided by the use of written culture. The area which he seems to have neglected was secular writings. Unlike the colonial officers, Rev. W. Pettigrew has not produced any monographs, except some articles about Tangkhul's ritual of the death, *Kathi Kasam*. And, we didn't find any of his writings in Tangkhul that deals with serious literary works, like poetry and essays.

### The Emergence of Native Writers

Among the students of Rev. William Pettigrew, Miksha K. Shimray was one of the first Tangkhuls to take up writing and translation work. M. K. Shimray wrote two books for the first time, which were *Jesuwui Khararchan* (in prose) and *Yurka Eina Kata Lairik* (Poetry), primarily as textbooks for school (Shimray 1988: 46). Given the fact that Tangkhuls were following oral culture before the arrival of White Missionaries, the literary acts of writing poetry and prose in Tangkhul language, through written narratives, were a new form of creativity. Although the act of writing and publishing works among the early native writers were largely motivated by the need to have school textbooks for higher classes, the native writers were introducing new forms of literary art in Tangkhul language, which the later generation would rely on. M. K. Shimray was also one of the first native writers who wrote scores of books in English. Some of the books which M. K. Shimray had written are: *Notes on Bible Reading* (1935), *Lesson Preparations and Teaching Method* (1956), *Church History* (1957), *Harmony of the Gospel* (1960), *James (Notes)* (1956), *Hebrews (Notes)* (1956), *The Coming of Christ* (1958) (Ibid: 76). Not much is known about the contents of these books as it is no longer available. It cannot be ascertain whether the books he had written were all in English or in Tangkhul language, however according to C. Chipang he had the flair to write both in English and Tangkhul. The titles of these books suggest that most of the writings of M. K. Shimray were concerning Biblical text and manual for Pastors and Sunday Schools. The last major publication of M. K. Shimray was *Tangkhul Miwurlung*, which was published in 1967 (Ibid. 77).<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, this book also remains unavailable now. However, some reference to this book indicates that it deals with history and traditional culture of Tangkhul Nagas. Later on this book was also used as textbook for high school students in Tangkhul. As noted by C. Chipang, Y. K. Shimray's contribution to the field of Tangkhul literature and written language has been quite distinctive in various aspects (Chipang 2006: 8-11).

Other native writers who took up writing were R. K. Luikham and S. Kanrei. The Tangkhul Literature Society's historical records show that R. K. Luikham had written *Chishutmi*, a school textbook for Class V (Shimray & Maransa, 1993: 12). *Chishutmi* was divided into two parts, *Akhum I* (book 1) and *Akhum II* (book 2), and it was first published in 1957 (Luikham 1957: 12). The contents of *Chishutmi: Akhum II* indicate that it is collection of essays, poetries, short stories from *The Holy Bible* and Tangkhul folktales. The diversity of subjects and themes in this small textbook, which consist of 67 pages and 18 Chapters, is astounding. One can discern certain distinctive aspects in the art of writing which native writers had employed and the issues that they have emphasised through the nature and contents of the textbooks. Two chapters in *Chishutmi: Akhum II* were transliteration of Tangkhul folktales, another two chapters were stories

from *The Holy Bible*, one chapter on Greek Mythology (Leonidas), one chapter on modern personality (Florence Nightingale), and the rest of essay chapters are mainly concerned with Christian values, such as *Nava-Navali Khayaklu* (Be Respectful to Parents) and *Morei Kaphara* (The Birth of Sin). Most of the poetries were also concerned with hardship in life and moral values. The early school textbooks serve as the platform for native writers to initiate new form of literary works, which were massive departure from oral literature in its style of presentation and contents. The students who studied the textbooks written by early native writers were in turn influenced by their style of writing and usages. If we make a comparison between the oral literature, like folktales and folksongs, with modern forms of writing like prose and poetry in school textbooks, there are numerous distinctions to be noted. One major aspects of the new form of literary works are that they are massively influenced by English literary form, which the native writers have learnt as a part of their schooling.

R. Luikham's *Wung Tangkhul Mayonza*, which was published in 1961, and M. K. Shimray's *Tangkhul Miwurlung* (1967), can be considered as the advent of proper form of book writing and publication by native authors. These books served as a departure from earlier attention of native writers that was driven by the form of textbook writing and publication, which primarily consist of short stories and poetry. The publication of a proper book, which deals with broad theme and intensive deliberation on a given subject, began to emerge with the publication of R. Luikham and M. K. Shimray's work. These books also signify a new shift from orientation towards biblical text and discourse, which missionaries and early native writers had initially given much attention. These books deals primarily with the factual accounts of the Tangkhuls, their history, culture and traditions which were in oral forms during those periods. Therefore, the value of these books does not lie in its contribution to literature, but more on the ethnographic and historical accounts of the Tangkhul, which were written from natives' perspective.

### **Tangkhul Literature Society and Indigenous Text Book Publication**

After the textbook publication that had been initiated by Rev. William Pettigrew, the task of writing textbook for schools were taken up Tangkhul writers, who had been educated in Mission schools. There was a massive proliferation of schools during the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century among the Tangkhuls, with the progress of Christianisation. Wherever Christianity finds foothold in a village, the new institutions that was ultimately established were: mission schools and church. Among those mission school educated Tangkhuls some of them felt the need to form an organisation that would take up the task of developing Tangkhul language. In 1938, Ng. Ragui called a meeting to discuss about formation of Tangkhul literary society, 12 individuals came to take part in the deliberation for Tangkhul language, where the members present unanimously agreed to establish 'Tangkhul Literature Society' (TLS).<sup>4</sup> The members of TLS took the initiative by writing articles and compilation of Tangkhul textbooks for the enhancement Tangkhul language. Though literate Tangkhuls had already contributed towards school textbooks, the concerted effort by a society and group of individuals for the development of Tangkhul language was absent before the formation of TLS. The formation of TLS and its literary activities are significant for Tangkhul language in various aspects. First of all, it heralds



the overall control of Tangkhul textbooks by a specific organisation devoted to the development of Tangkhul language. Secondly, with the formation of TLS, the task of textbook writing and linguistic development of Tangkhul was taken up non-religious organisation and individuals.

After six-seven years of TLS existence, numerous articles in Tangkhul language had been collected; however, before publishing these articles in the form of textbook, TLS decided to circulate it in the form of 'Magazine' (Ibid. 3). Thus, the TLS magazine *Zingthanwo* was published under the editorship of Y. K. Shimray. *Zingthanwo*, the first magazine/journal to be published in Tangkhul, was a new form of publication work as there was no newspaper or magazine in those days. The history of TLS has recorded that their activities were hampered by 'Japanese war'<sup>5</sup> during 1944. Most of their printed documents and the magazine *Zingthanwo* were burnt down along with their houses during the war. The attempt to revive *Zingthanwo* after the war was also not successful due to financial problems.

TLS has contributed towards the enhancement of Tangkhul language in numerous ways. After the end of colonial era, most of the activities of TLS began to bear fruit. Government of Manipur had not allowed Tangkhul language, including other tribal languages to be taught in schools. In 1975 TLS succeeded in pressuring Manipur Government to approve Tangkhul language to be taught in schools in Manipur.<sup>6</sup> Further in 1977, they also got the order from Manipur Government to make Tangkhul language as the medium of instructions in Ukhul. During these periods Tangkhul language was only taught in primary and lower classes, however in 1985 TLS also got the approval to introduce Tangkhul language text *Meiwon* for Class IX and X.<sup>7</sup>

Apart from the effort to get the official recognition of Tangkhul language for teaching as a subject in schools, TLS was also engaged in the development of Tangkhul language by taking up transliteration of folktales, review the grammatical usage and spellings errors in Tangkhul language. Currently, most of their activities have remained within the domain of school textbooks and Tangkhul language. On the flipside, the activities of TLS have not been able to move into serious literary works and publications. Though the nomenclature of TLS implies 'literature' as the major area of emphasis, it has remained and function as 'linguistic' society. Constrains on the part of TLS is largely related to the problems of Tangkhul language and the attempt to create standardisation has also not succeeded so far.

### **Major Literary Works in Tangkhul Language: Novellas and Poetry**

Most of the senior members of TLS classified genres of literary work into two parts: prose/essays and poetry. Given the practice that early Tangkhul textbooks, and still continued to be, were classified into two as prose and poetry section, it is a general understanding that these two distinct forms of literary works prevails among the early Tangkhul writers. However, the art of literary writing that were introduced and imbibed through the school textbooks has influenced Tangkhul literature to a large extent. Though print culture was a new medium which were appropriated from other culture, the hold of traditional arts over new forms literary works were seen in most of the early Tangkhul literature. These aspects can be seen in the massive transliteration of Tangkhul folktales by TLS for school textbooks and in the works of K. K. Hugh. Y. K. Shimray, P. R.



Yangkahao and others, who can all be considered as later generation of native writers. Although the themes in their literary works were largely based on Tangkhul folk-traditions, their style of written narratives was highly influenced by English literature. Thus, in the initial period, Tangkhul literary works were characterised by amalgamation of folk and modern. These form of literary works can be seen in the works of Y. K. Shimray's *Tangkhul Poetry: Book I*, which was reprinted in 1977-78, and so probably published earlier. There are seven poetries in *Tangkhul Poetry*, which includes themes like: *Maitonphy*, *Mara Eina Thngajanwon*, *Lungleng Philava*, *Chamtha Eina Chamthay*, *Timrawon*, *Sampheirok*, and *Tangkhul Ngalei* (Shimray, 1978). Except the last poetry *Tangkhul Ngalei*, which has become the theme song of Tangkhuls and even included in Tangkhul hymnal *Khokharum Laa*, all other poetries are based on Tangkhul folktales. In the pantheon of Tangkhul literary works, these poetries by Y. K. Shimray has remained as the most significant attempt to integrate two forms of literary genre: oral folktales and modern poetry. Let us consider the text from his poetry *Maitonphy* (Ibid. p. 1).

Khuiphalungra, Maitonlali,  
Tahangmilu, thakta taolu,  
Kathi phamei okathuili,  
Haplui, haplui machialu,  
Mazamara naniwui zat,  
Mamangmara naniwui khor,  
Khuirafalu iwui khavat,  
Akhuimilu iwui kahor.

With these dramatic imageries and dialogue, Y. K. Shimray began the poetic narrative in the adaptation from the popular Tangkhul folktale of Maitonphy and Shimreishang. The narrative above not only captures the angst in protagonist Shimreishang, but also introduces a new form of narration of Tangkhul folktales. The narrative style adopted in this poetry also seems well suited for 'drama writing'. What we can ascertain from the text above is a simple adaptation of rhyming and rhythm of English poetry, yet beautifully crafted. Apart from Y. K. Shimray, we have not come across many Tangkhul writers using the similar style of writing, with equal respect for the local idioms and poetic rules. Although there has been numerous attempts by Tangkhul writers to write poetry in proper form, such standards has not been able to be maintained so far.

Another notable poet in Tangkhul literature is R. Suisa, whose literary works remain to be taught in schools. He has introduced a new form of poetry writing in Tangkhul, which unfortunately, has not been followed by other writers. His poetry *Huinakhar* is exceptional in certain aspects of poetry writing in Tangkhul literature.<sup>8</sup>

Mha, mayansânpai mamalaipai  
Mha, khangshok khangzang, khanta, khangkâ,  
Kathem thangkhomei ngachei ngarok;  
Matungshin majirar akhamang,  
Khanao khari khayei khayeipai.  
Kateo kahak pam ongarokpai.

Kathai katho sheung sheivâpai.  
Okathui ngatak, harva khongpei.

Âya ajana akhama shok,  
Âya yangda âja karsangra.  
Shokkahai râkahai kachishut,  
Tâkakam shokluira raluire.  
Âkhama âjana yangvâra,  
Ârui ngayung, ânaolam âton;  
Thangthang ngaironron shokrâsâra,  
Shokthanghon theikhaira huinakhâr.<sup>9</sup>

The beauty of these verses by R. Suisa lie in exploring the linguistic quality of Tangkhul linguistic idioms. By emphasising more on the rhythmic value in the poetic narratives, the poetry-writing takes a new aspect where Tangkhul words can be synchronously formed by following the tones of every word. Usage of the root words like ‘*Khakhang*’ (to lift) into ‘*khangshok*, *khangzang*, *khangta*, *khangzang*’ are generally found only in Suisa’s writing. The tonal aspects in poetry writing which Suisa’s poetry has indicated are something that need to be explored further.

The art of poetry writing adopted by later writers, like M.C. Arang’s *Tangkhul Laasem*, has not followed the pattern of R. Suisa or Y. K. Shimray’s style of poetry writing. And, unfortunately, most of the Tangkhul poetries have not been able to maintain the literary quality as well as themes. If one compares Tangkhul poetry with the song lyrics of *Akui*, we will find that the literary art has not been fully explored, as lyrical text has more quality in terms of usage of words and emotions. Overall, some of the major impediments for the growth of Tangkhul literature are: the non-engagement of writers in poetry writing in recent times, and the corresponding non publication of major Tangkhul poetry.

The emergence of novel in Tangkhul language can be considered as major literary change, as it varies from folk-narratives to a great extend. Kongsui Luithui’s *Machapalu Leikashiva* has been considered as the first novel published in Tangkhul language.<sup>10</sup> The novel as a form of literary narrative is contemporaneous, and its subject deals with life experiences that are closer to real life situations than other forms of writing. There have been numerous novel writers in Tangkhul language and publication, short novellas continue unabated. Considering the length and plots in Tangkhul novels, most of the so called ‘Tangkhul novels’ would fall into the category of novellas. Most of the novels are published by the individual authors and private circulation is still the norm followed by most authors. Among the novels in Tangkhul language, Khamshim A. Shimray’s *Shairengwon*, *Khiapawu Khayon Khala*, and *Thumkahai Leishat* can be considered as important novels. The theme and plots in most of Khamshim’s novel represents the contrast and conflict between modern life and traditional values and customs. One can compare such form as literary works with the African post-colonial literature, like Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. Women authors writing Tangkhul novels are still rare, like hunting, writing seems to have become a man’s work. Leimiwon has remained the only

women novelist in Tangkhul literature, she has written numerous novels on her own. Her initial works like *Maranao wui Mirin* lacks the literary standard, and it is replete with grammatical errors. However, in her later novel like *Tangkhul Avaram* and *Iram Wonra*, she has improved in the narrative styles and plots to a great extent. In some aspects, she has contributed to Tangkhul literature by bringing in the views from women's aspect to contemporary situations. Her novels are generally centered on the theme of 'overcoming the tragedy' that one faces in life. In an interview in Ukhrul, she told me that writing gives the strength to face the tragedy that she has personally faced. She also mentioned that all the she earn is spend on book publication, however she find satisfaction in what she does; through writing novels and publication work she feels that she is contributing to the advancement of Tangkhul society.

In the genre of translation work, Stephen Angkang's *Genevieve* still remain as one of the major literary work. Apart from biblical translations and hymnals, not much translation of literature of other languages into Tangkhul has not been taken up Tangkhul writers. The varieties of literary genre in Tangkhul novella has also been limited to a large extent. New forms of writing like autobiography and biography of certain prominent individuals like *Ruichumhao*, *R. Suisa* has also been taken up. And, there has no publication in the field of drama writing in Tangkhul literature. Therefore, in the field literature Tangkhul writers and authors have much works to be accomplished.

### **Conclusion**

The history of print culture in Tangkhul language indicates that Tangkhuls have been able to appropriate the art and skill of writing to the full extent. Publication works has proliferated into various areas and localities. However, serious literature in Tangkhul language has not been taken up by many authors and writers. The publication works as well as literary writing in Tangkhul language has remain to be textbook centric. Most of the Tangkhul writers have written only to contribute for the school textbook. TLS and Christian Literature Society has been the only publication house that has been consistently publishing books in Tangkhul. The art and technology of writing and producing literary works may be considered as constituting different levels of linguistic activity. However, cursory observation indicates that Tangkhul language has not advanced much in the field of literature, although the literacy rates in Ukhrul is as high as the national average.

### **Notes**

1. *The Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. LXXVIII, 1898.
2. *The Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. LXXVII, 1902.
3. According to Y. K. Shimray the book Tangkhul Miwurlung was released from press four days after the dead of Y. K. Shimray. So, he was not able to see the publication of this book.
4. Tangkhul Society Rinchan (in Tangkhul) published by Tangkhul Literature society in 1993 (p. 2). Ibid, p. 3.
5. In the idioms and perspectives of local people in Ukhrul the attempt by INA soldiers to defeat the British colonial forces was generally understood as Japanese war. It was

based more on the racial features and massive numbers of Japanese soldiers who had invaded their territory.

6. Tangkhul Society Rinchan (in Tangkhul) published by Tangkhul Literature society in 1993, p. 11

7. Ibid. p. 25.

8. The actual date and publication of this poetry has not been properly traced. However, currently it is part of Tangkhul textbook for Class XII, published by Tangkhul Literature society in 2001. Wordham: Tuitam Kakhane (Class XII) TLS Publication, 2001.

9. Ibid. p. 99.

10. The exact date of publication remains uncertain and this novel remains unavailable.

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