

Cultural Resilience in a Changing World: The Marriage Traditions of the Konyak Naga

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the Konyak Naga group in Mon district, Nagaland, India, and its complex marital traditions, and attempts to combine modernity and traditional preservation. The research compares monogamous Tamkoang village marriages to polygynous Chi village marriages under the *Ahngship* system in Northern and Southern Konyak. The study demonstrates how geographical and socio-political variables have created these marriage customs, as well as how they strengthen communal relationships and social cohesion. The study shows the Konyaks' exceptional ability to adapt to modern problems while conserving their rich cultural legacy. The research uses *Miit/Meth* to show how ethical and religious standards affect marital faithfulness and society. The community's balance between contemporary advances and traditional beliefs shows how indigenous traditions may persist despite modernisation.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a culturally sanctioned union between two or more people that establishes certain rights and obligations between the people, between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws. Such marriage rights and obligations most often include but are not limited to, sex, labour, property, child-rearing, exchange, and status (Haviland *et al.*, 2008). Various cultures worldwide practice diverse forms of marriage arrangements. Across different societies, a spectrum of marital customs exists, varying in terms of the number and gender of spouses involved. While monogamous marriage remains prevalent in many societies, it is not the exclusive norm across all cultures (Malinowski, 1962; Lloyd, 2005). Historical evidence presents conflicting accounts regarding the prevalence and evolution of monogamy as a social practice. Betzig (1992) notes that in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Aztec Mexico,

Inca (Peru), India, and China, commoners typically practised monogamy, while elites often engaged in de facto polygyny. Presently, Western Europe predominantly upholds monogamy as the standard marital arrangement (MacDonald, 1995), although alternative forms of marriage are not precluded. Conversely, in several societies, monogamous marriage is legally mandated and normative (Henrich and Richerson, 2012). Legislation prohibiting polygyny has been enacted in various countries, such as Japan (1880), China (1953), India (1955), and Nepal (1963). Polygamy, the practice of marrying two or more individuals simultaneously, is widespread globally, including in tribal India (Majumdar and Madan, 1999). It can manifest as either polygyny or polyandry, with polygyny being the dominant form in approximately 80-85 per cent of cultures worldwide, particularly prevalent in parts of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (Haviland *et al.*, 2008). In societies where polygyny is practised, a groom typically compensates the bride's family with wealth, making it a pursuit of the affluent

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(Dasgupta and Sarkar, 1996). This marital pattern is prevalent in regions where violence, such as warfare, is prevalent and where women outnumber men, as seen in traditional food-producing societies (White, 1988). Thus, the study will attempt to analyze the forms of marriages that are common among the Konyak tribe. The focus of this study will be on determining whether or not the Konyak tribe employs monogamy exclusively or whether or not polygamy is also present.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Study Area

This research delves into the intricate fabric of the Konyak Naga group in the Mon district of Nagaland, India (see Figure 1). The Konyak tribe, an indigenous people originating from the northeastern state of Nagaland in India, is recognised as one of the major Naga tribes. The Konyak people have established a unique and recognisable presence in Naga culture due to their celebrated cultural history, formidable warrior lineage, and elaborate tattoo artwork. Ancient rituals and traditions, intricately woven into their social, religious, and economic activities, have earned the Konyak tribe a reputation for strict observance. The Konyaks reside in hill communities and have a strong bond with the lush scenery of their native area. Throughout history, the Konyaks have gained a reputation as head hunters, engaging in a practice that was formerly of great cultural and ceremonial significance. Nevertheless, due to the rise of Christianity, these rituals have mostly disappeared from existence, making room for a more current lifestyle while still maintaining important elements of their cultural legacy. The Konyak identity is strongly centred on their lively festivals, which include traditional music, dance, and rituals with great enthusiasm. The Aoleang Festival, observed in April, commemorates the arrival of the Konyak New Year and is a period of indulgence, jubilation, and exhibitions of culture (see Figure 2).



Figure. 1: Map of Mon district of Nagaland

Source: Maps of India (2015)



Figure. 2: Men cultural troops of Chi village during the Aoleang festival

Source: Author

The Konyaks are well-known for their exceptional artistic skills, particularly in woodcarving and weaving. The intricately carved ceremonial pillars in the traditional social institution known as 'Morung' and the beautiful shawls woven with exquisite designs demonstrate their creative brilliance and cultural inventiveness. Currently, the Konyak tribe is facing the challenges of modernization while making efforts to preserve its distinct cultural heritage. Educational programs, infrastructural development, and improved

connections have transformed their way of life. However, they strive to preserve a delicate equilibrium between tradition and progress.

The district, distinguished by its rugged terrain and rich cultural heritage, divides into two distinct geographical regions: the Northern and Southern regions. In the Northern Konyak region, a unique form of political organisation known as *Ahngship* holds sway. This monarchical system entrusts governance to a single figure, the *Ahng*, or King, who exercises authority over the villages within the domain. Again, among all the *Ahngs* (kings), there exists a greater monarch known as the *Pongyin Ahng*. They hold the highest position in the Konyak social structure. Notably, the *Ahngship* tradition encompasses the practice of polygyny, where the *Ahng* may take multiple spouses, thereby shaping social and familial structures.

Conversely, the Southern Konyak region presents a blend of traditional and modern democratic governance, showcasing a diverse tapestry of societal norms and political structures. This paper meticulously employed a purposive sampling approach to select the study area, aiming to unravel the complexities of the Konyak Naga marriage system. This methodological choice aimed to ensure a comprehensive exploration of marriage practices within the community. Therefore, one village from the Southern region was selected, known for its lack of *Ahngship* tradition, and another village was selected from the Northern region, where *Ahngship* reigns supreme, to offer contrasting insights into marital customs and societal organisation.

Study Area 1 (Non-Ahngship Practitioners)

Tamkoang village, located in the Southern Konyak region within the Mon district of Nagaland, stands as a testament to the Konyak Naga community's enduring traditions. Here, amidst the tranquil beauty of nature, the rhythms of life unfold in harmony with age-old customs and values, shaping the fabric of daily existence. In Tamkoang village, the practice of *Ahngship*, characterised by polygyny and monarchical rule, finds no place. Instead, the community embraces the sanctity of monogamous unions as the foundation of marital bonds. In this context, the community imbues the institution of

marriage with profound cultural significance, intertwining the strands of tradition and heritage that unite the community.

Study Area 2 (Ahngship Practitioners)

Chi village, located in the Northern Konyak region of Mon district, stands as a testament to the Konyak tribe's enduring traditions. Its designation as the oldest village in the Konyak community emphasises its cultural significance. Chi village upholds the age-old monarchical system known as *Ahngship*, where the King, known as the *Pongyin Ahng*, regarded as the greater king of all the Kings, exercises governance. Notably, the *Ahng* of Chi village holds sway over the largest territory among all *Ahngs* in the Mon district, cementing the village's central role in Konyak society. Within this framework, the practice of polygyny reflects the traditional norms and customs that have shaped the fabric of Konyak culture. This study aims to provide insights into *Ahngship's* unique dynamics and implications for marriage practices among the Konyak people through an exploration of Chi village.

Methods Applied

This paper presents the results of a comprehensive field study conducted over the course of several intervals—in 2019 and 2021. The data was collected from two Konyak villages situated in the Mon district. The study area was chosen based on Konyaks' geographic distribution in both the Northern and Southern regions. The village of Chi was selected as the representative of the northern region, while Tamkoang village was chosen to represent the Southern region. Data was collected through multiple methods, such as observation, interviews, and focused group interviews. In addition, photographs were utilised to enhance the data, in conjunction with information obtained from secondary sources.

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

What is Marriage in Konyak Society?

In Konyak culture, marriage is an officially acknowledged and legally enforceable partnership between males and females, granting legal privileges and social standing to offspring born to the female. It

profoundly roots their social, cultural, and economic structure, serving as a crucial link between families and clans. The process is characterised by elaborate ceremonies, which represent the shift from dating to marriage.

In Konyak culture, marriage has several purposes, including both practical and symbolic roles. Practically, it serves to achieve and maintain kinship and lineage, ensuring the preservation of ancestral traditions, values, and legacy. Additionally, it cultivates partnerships across diverse clans and communities, enabling collaboration between various groups and encouraging the establishment of peace and stability.

Marriage has substantial economic repercussions for families and the wider society. It facilitates the transfer of resources, promotes social cohesiveness, and strengthens economic relationships. It goes beyond individual unions, establishing a connection that extends beyond individual unions and to broad social groupings, strengthening ties, and promoting a sense of collective identity.

Marriage is critical for the tribe's reproduction and continuation of its cultural legacy. It creates a secure and consistent environment for reproduction and raising children, ensuring future generations' welfare and assimilation. Marriage functions as a means of passing down cultural practices, beliefs, and traditions from one generation to the next. This helps to cultivate a sense of cultural identification and belonging among younger individuals in society.

Types of marriage

Among the Konyak, two main types of marriage based on the number of spouses are observed: monogamy and polygyny. Monogamous marriage is the prescribed type of marriage for the people of the Konyak tribe, where individuals typically have one spouse at a time. In contrast, polygynous marriage is practised in the Northern Region, primarily by the *Ahngs* (Kings) subgroup, though it is not universally adopted by all community members.

Monogamy

There is no local term for monogamy; however, following a group discussion with the Konyak

Women's Organisation of Tamkoang village, conducted after a church gathering, the topic of marital practices arose. When asked about the prevailing types of marriage within their society, the unanimous response from the women was, '*Yahli buh tuh sak phai nga yah üng boh, nyao sey pa nye lüm tüh chong yah üng pu,*' which translates to, 'We marry only one person, so why should we marry more than two or three wives or husbands.' This statement indicates that the people of Tamkoang village, along with other non-*Ahng* villages, practice monogamy.

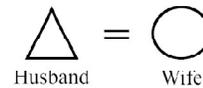


Figure 3: Monogamous types of marriage
Source: Author

The villagers have upheld the practice of monogamous marriage since time immemorial. The practice of monogamous marriage in Tamkoang Village predates written records, with oral traditions and legends passing down stories of ancestors who embraced this sacred union. From generation to generation, the villagers have honoured the sanctity of monogamous marriage, viewing it as a sacred covenant between two individuals bound by love, commitment, and mutual respect. Central to the practice of monogamy is the belief in the importance of fidelity and loyalty within marital relationships. Marriage is not merely a social or legal contract but is imbued with spiritual significance, reflecting the unity of two souls joined together in love and harmony. Within this framework, monogamy is seen as the ideal expression of marital devotion, providing a foundation for stable families and harmonious communities.



Figure 4: Mr and Mrs Bechung at Tamkoang village
Source: Author

Monogamous marriage holds profound cultural significance, extending beyond individual couples to strengthen communal bonds. Celebrated with elaborate rituals and feasts, marriages bring together families and neighbours, fostering kinship and solidarity. Traditional gender roles are maintained, but monogamous marriage also promotes equality and partnership between spouses. Despite external influences, monogamous marriage remains a cherished tradition, reflecting the village's enduring cultural heritage amidst societal changes. Under the monogamous marriage, further divisions of marriages are explored based on procuring a spouse.

- i. *Thaotey büh* (live-in relation): This type of marriage can be described as a live-in relation union followed by parental approval. In this scenario, the man and woman decide to settle down together without initially formally involving their respective parents. After the couple has made their decision, they eventually inform their parents about their intentions. Upon hearing about the union, the parents engage in discussions with both individuals and ultimately agree to the marriage. This process may involve negotiations, considerations of compatibility, and discussions about familial expectations. While the initial decision to settle down was made independently by the couple, parental approval is sought and obtained afterwards, reflecting a blend of personal autonomy and familial endorsement within the marriage process.
- ii. *Shuhai büh* (love marriage): This type of marriage scenario involves a relationship between a boy and a girl who are romantically involved but choose not to disclose their relationship to their respective parents openly. Despite keeping their relationship private, the couple spends a significant amount of time together and shares a close bond. However, due to concerns about societal judgement and the potential consequences of engaging in a relationship without parental knowledge, the parents of the boy may intervene. They may express their worries about the risks of the

relationship, including the fear of *mütt* if the couple were to engage in inappropriate behaviour or if the relationship were to end abruptly. To prevent any potential harm to the family's reputation, the parents may urge the boy to bring the girl home and formalise their relationship through marriage before any negative repercussions occur. This situation highlights the complex dynamics between personal desires, familial expectations, and societal norms within the context of marriage and relationships.

- iii. *Na nang tey büh* (premarital pregnancy): This type of marriage situation involves a scenario where the girl becomes pregnant before getting married. Upon confessing her pregnancy to her parents, they act by sending a messenger to the boy's house. If the boy and his parents agree to the marriage, the girl is invited to come and stay at the boy's house, where they proceed to formalise their union. However, if either the boy's parents or the girl herself disagrees with the marriage proposal, an alternative course of action unfolds. As the girl's pregnancy progresses and she nears the time of childbirth, she may choose to leave her paternal clan's house, as it is considered taboo for her to give birth there. Instead, she seeks refuge at the boy's house, where she ultimately gives birth to the child. This decision is made to avoid bringing shame or disgrace upon her family due to the societal stigma associated with childbirth out of wedlock. This scenario underscores the significance of cultural norms and taboos surrounding marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth within the community. It also highlights the complexities of navigating familial expectations, social norms, and individual choices in the context of marriage and parenthood.
- iv. *Phey jee yah-lee büh* (marriage by negotiation): It is a marriage by negotiation among the Tamkoang village. The process often begins when the family of a prospective groom expresses their interest in marrying their son to a specific girl. This expression of

interest is conveyed through a messenger (*Iangpa*) who visits the girl's family to deliver the proposal. Upon receiving the proposal, the girl's family carefully considers it, considering factors such as the reputation and standing of the boy's family, the suitability of the match, and the potential benefits and implications of the union. They may consult with relatives, elders, and community members to gather opinions and guidance before deciding. If the girl and her family find the proposal acceptable and agree to the marriage, they convey their consent to the boy's family through the messenger. This marks the beginning of formal negotiations between the two families to finalise the marriage arrangement. The negotiation process may involve discussions about various aspects of the marriage, including the dowry or bride price, the division of household responsibilities, and other customary practices and expectations. Both families strive to reach agreements that are mutually beneficial and satisfactory to all parties involved. Once the negotiations are successfully concluded and both families agree, the marriage is formalised through a series of rituals and ceremonies. These may include engagement ceremonies, blessing ceremonies, and, ultimately, the wedding ceremony itself.

Why monogamy?

The practice of monogamy among the Tamkoang village (Southern region) is primarily influenced by their steadfast belief in the concept of *müt/meth*. Yet, what exactly does the *mütt* belief system entail? Let us delve into its meaning and significance. *Müt* is a term in the Tamkoang dialect and it is also known as *Meth* in the Konyak common language (The Konyak tribe exhibits linguistic variations, with terms being pronounced differently based on geographical location. For instance, in Tamkoang dialect, the term is pronounced as *müt* with an 'ü' sound and *meth* with an 'e' sound in Konyak common language). It is a religious-social ethical norm which shapes the social, political, and economic life of the Konyaks. It has

significant moral and ethical implications for both the individual and the community. It is their philosophical and social-ethical foundation that provides the basis for communitarian existence. The contents of *Müt/Meth* are goals, ideas, rules, expectations, sanctions, and justification. The principle of *Müt/Meth* guides the Konyaks to the way of truthfulness, righteousness, justice, honesty, reliability, integrity, courage, courtesy, and other values of life (Apang, 2016). Although the term cannot be directly translated into English, A. Peihwang Wangsa (2000) identifies *Meth* as an ethical principle of 'truthfulness,' 'righteousness,' 'honesty,' 'courtesy,' and 'deliberation' and Noknai Konyak (2022) gave a crude translation of the term *Meth* as 'standing for the truth of things.'

The practice of *Müt/Meth* extends beyond individual introspection; it is steeped in the belief that the Supreme Being is ever-watchful. This conviction fosters a culture of collaborative deliberation, where decisions are made with profound consideration and consensus. Furthermore, *Müt/Meth* serves as the bedrock for discerning righteousness and wrongdoing, transcending mere human reasoning and judicial decrees (Wangsa, 2000). Even when judicial rulings fall short of delivering justice, *Müt/Meth* remains resolutely truthful and unwavering in its guiding principles. Moreover, *Müt/Meth* serves a dual purpose as a guiding light for personal identity. It instils a sense of integrity that manifests in acts of kindness and compassion, thereby enriching interpersonal relationships within Konyak society. This adherence to *Müt/Meth* not only improves individual conduct but also permeates systemic interactions within organizations. In essence, *Müt/Meth* catalyses the cultivation of ethical behaviour and fosters a culture where integrity, collaboration, and compassion thrive, ultimately contributing to the harmonious functioning of Konyak society.

Müt/Meth, in the context of marriage, dictates that if one were to consider entering marriage with more than one spouse, they must bear in mind the weighty repercussions dictated by the principles of *Müt/Meth*, potentially leading to severe consequences such as death within the family. Within the intricate tapestry of Konyak society, the ethos of *Müt* stands as a guiding beacon, illuminating the path

towards personal conduct and societal equilibrium. Central to this guiding philosophy is the staunch advocacy for the practice of monogamous relationships, heralded as a cornerstone of virtuous living.

Delving deeper into the philosophical underpinnings of *Miit*, it becomes evident that monogamy is not merely a societal convention but a profound reflection of the core values and ethical precepts it espouses. At its essence, monogamy signifies a sacred commitment to fidelity, trust, and mutual respect between partners, transcending mere contractual arrangements to foster profound emotional bonds and relational stability. Within this framework, the pursuit of multiple partners is viewed not only as a breach of trust but as a betrayal of the foundational principles upheld by *Miit*.

Moreover, the belief in monogamy within the context of *Miit* is intrinsically tied to notions of integrity and moral rectitude. It entails a steadfast dedication to upholding the sanctity of the marital bond, prioritising the well-being and happiness of one’s chosen partner above all other considerations. Indeed, monogamy is not merely a behavioural practice but a manifestation of one’s unwavering commitment to the ethical imperatives enshrined within *Miit*.

Beyond its significance in individual relationships, the adherence to monogamy resonates deeply within the broader societal fabric, serving as a unifying force that fosters cohesion and solidarity among community members. Within *Miit*-influenced societies, the practice of monogamy transcends personal choice to become a collective responsibility, safeguarding the foundational values and principles essential for the well-being and stability of the community at large.

The belief in monogamy within the context of *miit/meth* encompasses a multifaceted spectrum of philosophical, ethical, and societal dimensions, resonating with profound implications that reverberate throughout the entirety of Konyak society. Thus, it is incumbent upon individuals to heed the guiding principles of *Miit* and adhere to the practice of monogamy, lest they risk invoking the grave consequences that await those who deviate from its righteous path. For instance, in the interview with

Thongo Khushu, an 88-year-old resident of Tamkoang village, when asked about the practice of monogamy, he explained, ‘*Müm Tobu area tüh nyao sey pa suk khao müh nyei leeyah nye, yah jing tüh mütt jiyah sao poh, Lee tey üng poh,*’ which translates to, ‘In the Tobu area (Tobu area is part of a Southern region and Tamkoang village belongs to this category of geographical distribution) in general, we do not marry more than one wife or husband as it is unacceptable within the *miit* belief system and failure to adhere to this principle will lead to severe consequences, including death within the family.’ The explanation provided by the 88-year-old Thongo Khushu from Tamkoang village sheds light on the cultural and moral considerations that underpin the practice of monogamy in the Tamkoang village and Tobu area in general. His reference to the concept of *miit*, which implies divine punishment for wrongdoing, suggests a deeply ingrained fear of moral transgression and its potential consequences within the community.

Polygyny

Polygynous marriage is practised by the *Ahngs* (Kings) of the Northern region of Mon district. Study area 2, Chi Village, falls under the classification of an *Ahngship* Practitioner Village. A monarchical system organises the village’s social structure, with *Pongyin Ahng*, often referred to as the greater king or greater monarch, holding the ultimate power.

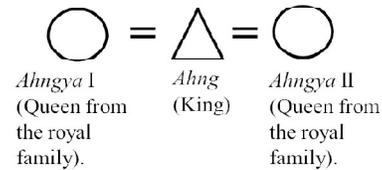


Figure 5: Polygynous type of marriage.
Source: Author

The *Ahng* can keep multiple wives, and one of the most favoured ways of acquiring their wives is through negotiation. Arranged marriages among the Konyak kings often involved selecting a wife from another kingdom, preferably a *Wangcha* (princess) from a neighbouring royal family. This practice was typically orchestrated through negotiations led by clan members, village elders, and other esteemed figures within the community. The selection of a bride from another kingdom served multiple purposes within the *Ahng* society. Firstly, it was a strategic decision

aimed at fostering alliances and strengthening diplomatic ties between the two kingdoms. By marrying a *Wangcha* (princess) from neighbouring villages, the *Pongyin Ahng* could solidify political alliances, enhance mutual defence agreements, or secure trade partnerships, thereby ensuring the stability and prosperity of his kingdom.

Moreover, choosing a wife from another kingdom, especially a princess, carried symbolic significance and prestige. It not only elevated the status of *Pongyin Ahng* but also demonstrated his ability to form alliances with other powerful rulers in the region. It is often viewed as a union of two royal houses, signifying unity, cooperation, and shared interests between the respective villages. Additionally, the selection of a bride from another kingdom was believed to bring benefits not only to the king but also to the entire village or community. The queen consort is expected to bring with her valuable resources, knowledge, and connections that could benefit the kingdom as a whole. Whether through hereditary wealth, political influence, or strategic alliances, the queen is seen as a source of prosperity and advancement for both the royal family and the villagers.

Why polygyny?

Polygyny, the practice of having multiple wives simultaneously, is a common phenomenon among the *Pongyin Ahngs* (kings) throughout history, driven by a variety of strategic, social, political, and personal motivations. However, the ordinary subjects of the *Ahngs* generally practice monogamy, choosing to marry only one partner throughout their lives. It is intriguing to observe that while the concept of *Müt/Meth* serves as a significant guiding principle for monogamy among ordinary practitioners, it does not seem to apply to the *Ahngs*, for which it lacks a clear explanation. In a society where hierarchy and power dynamics are significant, polygynous unions seem reserved for the highest echelons of authority. While the commoners practice monogamy, the ruler, by virtue of his position, is entitled to marry multiple spouses. This juxtaposition highlights the nuanced dynamics of tradition, status, and societal norms within the *Ahng's* territory. While the general populace prioritises fidelity and commitment in marriage, the

royal elite exercise their privilege to engage in polygynous arrangements, potentially symbolising their authority and prestige. This portrayal of Chi village's marital customs unveils the complex interplay between social structures and power dynamics, where the behaviour of the elite diverges from that of the masses concerning matrimony. The narrative elucidates that the broader populace of the *Ahngship Practitioners* villages adheres to monogamous relationships, while exclusively the *Ahng* or the Royal family espouses polygyny as a customary practice. Several additional reasons contribute to the existence of the polygynous marriage system:

- i. **Dynastic stability:** One of the primary reasons the *Pongyin Ahngs* practised polygyny was to ensure the stability and continuity of their dynasty. By marrying multiple wives, they increased the likelihood of producing numerous heirs through multiple wives, ensuring a stable rule and preventing succession crises in the territorial villages.
- ii. **Political alliances:** Polygynous marriages served as a tool for the *Pongyin Ahng* (king) to establish strategic alliances with other ruling families or tribes. By marrying into powerful families, they could strengthen diplomatic ties, foster political cohesion, and expand their influence over neighbouring villages.
- iii. **Expansion of power:** Marrying women from different regions or groups enabled the *Pongyin Ahng* (king) to extend their authority over new territories. Through marital connections, they could integrate diverse populations into their realm, thereby consolidating and expanding their power base.
- iv. **Wealth and prestige:** Having multiple wives symbolised the *Pongyin Ahng's* (king) wealth and status within the society. It demonstrated his ability to support large households and maintain numerous marital relationships, enhancing his prestige and reinforcing his position of authority.
- v. **Strategic alliances:** Polygynous marriages often served as a means of solidifying

- diplomatic ties and deterring potential rivals. By marrying daughters of powerful nobles or neighbouring rulers, the *Pongyin Ahng* could strengthen alliances, negotiate treaties, and deter potential rivals, fostering stability and security within his realm.
- vi. Fertility and succession: Polygyny increased the likelihood of producing male heirs, which was crucial for ensuring the continuity of the royal lineage. By having multiple wives, the *Pongyin Ahng* mitigated the risk of dynastic extinction and ensured a strong line of succession, crucial for maintaining stability and legitimacy.
 - vii. Economic benefits: The *Ahng* has the largest land in his kingdom, and managing his property takes a lot of people. Therefore, multiple wives could contribute to the economic prosperity of the kingdom. They could manage household affairs, oversee agricultural production, and enhance the king's economic resources, thereby strengthening the kingdom's financial stability and resilience.
 - viii. Social structure: Polygyny reinforced hierarchical social structures, affirming *Pongyin Ahng's* dominance and authority over his subjects. It also served as a means of rewarding loyal supporters and allies with marital alliances, thereby reinforcing political alliances and social cohesion.
 - ix. Cultural and religious norms: Polygyny was often sanctioned or even mandated by cultural customs or religious beliefs, reflecting traditional norms regarding marriage, gender roles, and familial obligations.
 - x. Personal desire: While political and strategic considerations often drove the practice of polygyny, the *Pongyin Ahngs* may have also been motivated by personal desires for companionship, affection, etc. For instance, he had the power to marry the most beautiful girl in the village, and once he claimed the girl as his, no one had the right to object to or lay their rights over the girl. However, such motivations were often intertwined with broader political, social, and economic considerations.
 - xi. Marital offerings to the King: In historical contexts, instances of conflict involving theft or other offences often resulted in individuals offering their daughters' hands in marriage to the king as a means of mitigating punishment or resolving disputes. This practice served as a form of appeasement or restitution, with the hope of securing leniency or forgiveness from the king in exchange for the marital alliance.
 - xii. Community obligation: In situations where the *Ahngya* (Queen) is unable to produce an heir to the throne, it was common for the community to intervene by arranging for the *Pongyin Ahng* (king) to take another wife from the royal family of another village. This decision aimed to ensure the succession of a male child, thereby securing the continuity of the royal lineage, and safeguarding the stability of the kingdom. These reasons collectively illustrate how polygyny served the interests of kings in consolidating power, expanding influence, ensuring stability, and maintaining social order within their realms.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the remarkable capacity of the Konyak Naga people in Mon district, Nagaland, India, to withstand and adjust to challenges. Despite the widespread influences of modernisation, the Konyaks are resolute in their efforts to save their rich cultural heritage and customs. This community showcases a vibrant interaction between traditional practices and modern progress, aiming to preserve their own cultural principles while adapting to the complexities and possibilities of the present day.

An intriguing feature of the Konyak Naga culture is the notable variation in marriage practices based on geographical location. According to Tamkoang hamlet, monogamy is the prevailing custom in the Southern area. This kind of marriage prioritises integrity, trust, and mutual respect between couples, which are values profoundly embedded in the social structure of the community. The Konyaks conduct

elaborate ceremonies to honour monogamous partnerships, aiming to enhance community relationships and reinforce the collective identity. The Konyaks' adherence to these rituals demonstrates their dedication to preserving societal unity and supporting traditional gender norms while also fostering fairness and collaboration amongst married couples.

On the other hand, the *Ahngship* system, a type of monarchical rule where the *Ahng* (king) practices polygyny, distinguishes the Northern area, particularly in villages like Chi. This approach is not only a matter of personal preference but rather serves several strategic objectives. Polygyny among the *Ahngs* serves to establish alliances, ensure political stability, and augment the village's reputation and riches. Matrimonial Princesses from nearby towns often orchestrate matrimonial unions, fostering diplomatic relations and forming agreements for mutual protection. Such relationships have both symbolic and practical advantages since they enhance *Ahng's* prestige and provide wealth and influence that benefit the whole community.

The contrast in marriage customs between the southern and northern areas underscores the cultural heterogeneity within the Konyak tribe. The presence of such a wide range of cultural practices is evidence of the community's capacity to adjust their age-old customs to various social and political circumstances, all the while maintaining their fundamental cultural identity. Although monogamous and polygynous customs vary, both are essential for maintaining the social, cultural, and economic structure of Konyak society. They guarantee the uninterrupted succession of descendants, cultivate connections between different families, and encourage a shared sense of group identity.

The Konyak Naga people are very dedicated to safeguarding their traditional legacy. Their dedication is apparent in their creative prowess, rituals, and social conventions, which they actively record and commemorate. It is important to make diligent efforts to preserve these traditions because they play a vital role in transmitting cultural knowledge to future generations. The Konyaks have seen notable changes in their lifestyle due to educational initiatives,

infrastructure advancements, and enhanced connections. However, they make a conscious effort to maintain a delicate balance between their traditional values and the pursuit of modernity.

Konyak culture deeply instills the notion of *Müt/Meth*, a religious-social ethical standard that influences both individual conduct and collective choices. Core principles such as truthfulness, righteousness, and integrity centre the community's way of life. Within the realm of marriage, *Müt/Meth* upholds the sacredness of monogamy, seeing faithfulness and mutual respect as of utmost importance. This ethical framework ensures the Konyaks remain firmly rooted in their traditional ideals, even as they navigate the complexities of contemporary life.

The community's attitude towards modernization reflects its endeavour to reconcile tradition and modernity. The Konyaks recognise the significance of adopting contemporary innovations to enhance their standard of living while still preserving the customs that shape their sense of self. Community activities, educational programmes, and a firm commitment to their cultural values establish this delicate balance. The Konyaks demonstrate how indigenous people can thrive in the modern world while safeguarding their traditional history by using contemporary components in a respectful and preservative manner.

Ultimately, the Konyak Naga group exemplifies the conservation and modification of cultural traditions in response to contemporary social changes. Their specific geographical and socioeconomic circumstances influence their unique marriage customs, highlighting the cultural diversity and strength of their society. The community's unwavering commitment to preserving its traditional history while simultaneously embracing the advantages of modernity highlights a deep loyalty to its identity and principles. The Konyaks maintain their history by adopting a well-rounded strategy that guarantees the preservation of their distinct cultural traditions and values in the face of the changing modern world. *Conflict of Interest:* There is no conflict of interest.

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