International Journal of Home Science 2025; 11(3): 327-331

International Journal of Home Science

ISSN: 2395-7476
Impact Factor (RJIF): 5.66
IJHS 2025; 11(3): 327-331
© 2025 IJHS
www.homesciencejournal.com
Received: 08-10-2025
Accepted: 12-11-2025

Ngamreiphi T
Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Home Science, University of Lucknow, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

Shivani Srivastava
Department of Home Science, NSCB Govt. Girls PG College Aliganj, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

Corresponding Author:
Ngamreiphi T
Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Home Science, University of Lucknow, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

Innovation in sustainable fashion design: A critical analysis of Tangkhul traditional revival

Ngamreiphi T and Shivani Srivastava

DOI: https://www.doi.org/10.22271/23957476.2025.v11.i3e.2013

Abstract
The Tangkhul Naga tradition textile of Manipur represents one of the most important ways that express their cultural identity among the Naga tribes. These textiles Which are Rich in rituals association symbolic motifs, and weaving techniques, represent a living heritage that links spirituality, history and communal life. Even though Tangkhul textiles remain to be prominent in both traditional as well as and contemporary contexts, the complex systems of knowledge and historical significance cultural meanings embedded in their production are increasingly at risk due to modernization, changing lifestyles, and the rise of fast fashion.

By integrating Tangkhul textiles within broader discussions of heritage preservation and sustainable cultural practices, this review emphasizes both their resilience and the challenges they face in the modern times. The findings emphasize the need to document and critically examine indigenous knowledge systems as a basis for their future revival and reinterpretation.

The present research not only contributes to historical continuity of culture but also provides a framework for encouraging traditional heritage into sustainable fashion innovation.

Keywords: Tangkhul Naga textiles, cultural heritage, weaving traditions, symbolic motifs, sustainability

Introduction

Rationale

Examining the history and motifs of Tangkhul textiles is essential for preserving the cultural past cultural meticulously documenting the symbolic significance ingrained in these designs, and strengthen the community's shared identity for future generations to come. As a result, this study surpasses a fundamental historical investigation, attempting to contribute to the continuity and viability of Tangkhul cultural customs and practice.

Objective

The objective of this study is to review the historical and cultural context of Tangkhul textiles in order to understand their function as carriers of cultural context and identity. The study delves into the ancestral and cultural context of Tangkhul textiles, along with their representation of motifs, ritual applications, and transmission of weaving skills.

Textiles have always played a significant role in preserving the sense of self, culture, and traditions of societies. For the Tangkhul Naga people of Manipur, Northeast India, handwoven textiles are more than merely of clothing but symbols of culture that symbolize collective memory and social values. Each design and patterns narrate stories of the community's past, reflects religious beliefs, and act as a visual representation of tribal identity, status in the society, and life-cycle events. In addition to being Visually appealing these textiles function as element of non-verbal communication, connecting generations through the safeguarding of indigenous and craftsmanship and skills. Traditionally, the weaving process was carried out by hand utilizing natural fibres and dyes, a tedious technique that required dedication, skill, and creativity. Women, as custodians of this artwork, safeguarded the continuity of cultural heritage by transmitting weaving practices to future generations. Thus, Tangkhul textiles represent not only physical culture but also an essential means of cultural continuity, durability, and identity preservation Tangkhul traditional attire is differed, with garments

specific to both men and women. The attire for Men's includes upper garments such as Haora Kachon, Luirim Kachon, and Thangkang Kachon, while the Malao, a loincloth, is worn during festivals and folk- dance performances. The attire for Women's attire is more extravagant, comprising upper garments Raivat, Chonkhom and lower garments such as Seichang Kashan, phangyai, Zingtai Kashan, and Phor Kashan, which are long sarongs/ wraparound skirts. The Muka, typically comprises of black cotton, function as a bustier. These traditional attires are primarily can be observed during significant cultural events, including festivals, weddings, and religious ceremonies (Thoudam & Mathur, 2018) [4] Despite their significance in cultural, traditional weaving practices have declined due to modern technology, changing ways of life, and the accessibility of fabric produced in mass-quantities. To address this, the present study intends to explore the history, symbolism, weaving techniques, materials, challenges, and opportunities associated with Tangkhul textiles.

Methodology

This review was designed with the particular objective of understanding the historical and cultural context of Tangkhul textiles and interpreting how they serve as carriers of cultural identity. The study particular attention on how motifs, spiritual applications, and method of weaving are represented, transfer, and reinterpreted in contemporary contexts.

Sources of data

Since the review was relied on secondary sources, including journal articles, book chapters, websites and blogs. The following materials were selected in order to provide insights into Tangkhul textiles, Naga weaving customs in broad term, and the connection of indigenous craftsmanship with sustainable fashion design.

A systematic search was conducted across academic sources such as Google Scholar, IRJSS, JSTOR, ResearchGate, the Sangai Express, e-pao net. The search terms combined keywords like "Traditional attire of Tangkhul", "Tangkhul weaving", "traditional motifs of Tangkhul, "weaving knowledge transmission and sustainable fashion and heritage textiles". Publications between 2010 and 2025 were incorporated to ensure both historical depth and contemporary relevance.

Historical Context of Tangkhul Textiles

In Tangkhul Naga custom, weaving is a centuries-old craft deeply rooted in mythology and tradition. According to legend, Mansingla of Zingtai Tangkhul khaorui who was taught weaving by Ayi Leimava, who first introduced the art of hand weaving to Tangkhul women, making the practice not only as a means of a livelihood but also a sacred gift of cultural origin. in the past, weaving was seen as an essential skill for women, particularly those preparing for marriage, since mastery of the craft symbolized hard work, dedication, and sophistication in culture. Thus, a women ability to weave thus showed not only technical expertise but also a woman's cultural and social status within the society.

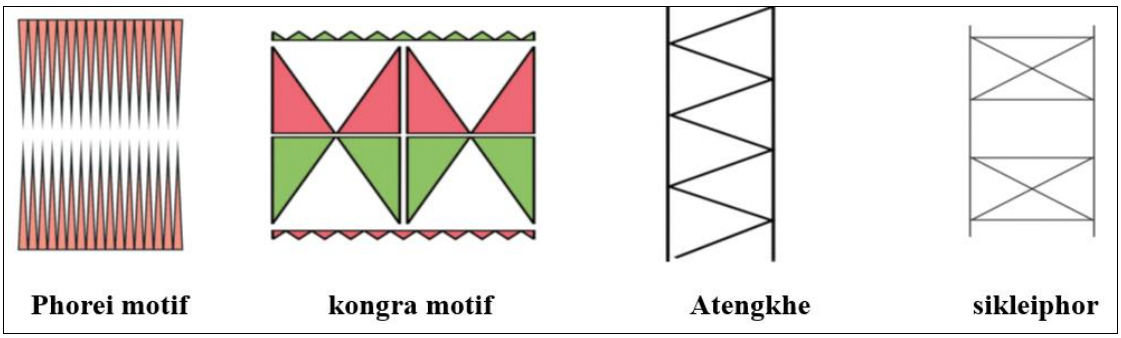
The tribe traditionally wove its textiles using handlooms, most notably the backstrap/ loin loom, which formed the Centre of attraction of household and social life. Beyond its functional role in making garments, the loom evolved an area of connection where women gathered, discussed, shared folklore, and reinforced their connection to their fellow women. Some of the textile textiles reflect the wearers age sexual orientation, status in the society or ceremonial

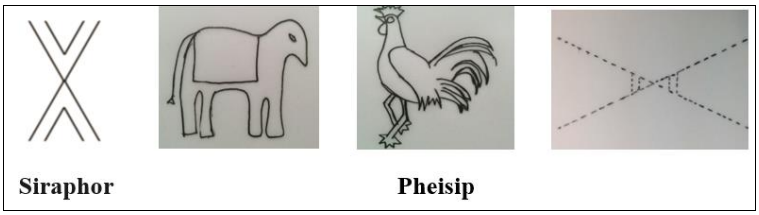
Three interlinked steps involved in weaving process the first step is spinning cotton threads, dyeing them using natural dyes, and weaving the fabric on the loom. The use of natural fibres, predominantly cotton is cultivated by the women themselves, and dyes derived from the surrounding area profound the Tangkhul people's deep ecological knowledge. For instance, red was produced from the roots of the creeper Mayong. While yellow dye was obtained from the stem of the orchid Harthaowon, even from the roots, bark, fruits and leaf the colour that related to the environment.

Cultural Significance and Symbolism

Tangkhul textiles is their elaborate use of motifs and colours, which function as a kind of visual storytelling. Motifs often represent aspects of surrounding, stories from mythology narratives, and values in the society. The lozenge shape, for instance, has been recognized as a recurring motif that signifies fertility and continuity, while stripes and contrast in colour contrasts typically denote clan affiliations or ritual meanings

Due to the symbolic meaning of textiles employed as non-verbal means of communication, encoding memories of culture into material form. Shimray (2024) [2] Motifs represent symbolic stories which connect past and present, allowing textiles to serve as text of culture. In this respect, textiles extend beyond aesthetic objects to become archives of indigenous knowledge systems. Their meanings change but evolve as every generation interprets traditional patterns, thereby ensuring continuity while permitting adaptation.





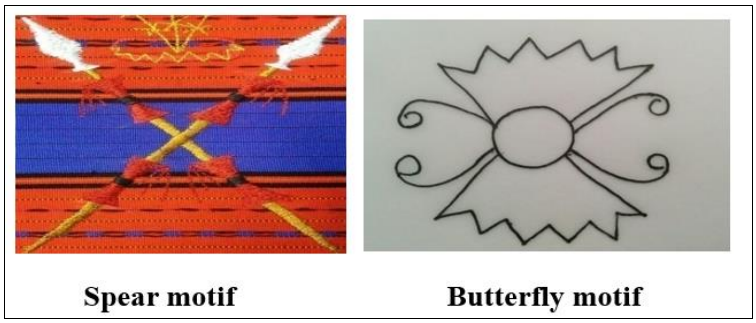


Image retrieved from villagesquare.in

Motifs are central to this symbolism, with designs often arranged in mirror-image patterns. Among the most commonly used is the *Phorei* or spearhead motif, considered the most significant motif of the Tangkhul Naga. Found in almost all their textiles, *Phorei* is a densely packed design that symbolise beauty and grace for women. Other frequently employed motifs include the *Kongra*, *Atengkhe* (cheek of a bird), *Sikleiphor* (crab), *Siraphor*, elephant, ramik eye of loin loom, dotted line in black colour butterfly, cock, spear, and *Pheisip*, each carrying its own cultural resonance and symbolic value. Khaifa kashan motif (frog waist motif) tale of love, loss beyond mere aesthetic/a symbol of love. Chonkap represent the symbol of strength power, responsibility and protection. Uri-Ura Makha (hoolocks chin motif) reflects a symbiotic relationship between man and animals, the harmonious coexistence and interconnectedness with the surrounding.

Colours play a similarly vital role in conveying meaning. Red signifies the blood of enemies, courage, bravery, and good fortune, while a red sash specifically symbolizes fire used to burn an enemy's village. Green (*khamaying*), reflecting the vegetation of the landscape, represents growth, peace, and tranquillity. Yellow is associated with spring, symbolising gaiety, innocence, and the lively spirit of youth. White denotes purity, devotion, and sanctity, whereas black is linked to evil, bloodshed, and death. Together, these colours embody layers of social, spiritual, and ecological meaning, turning Tangkhul textiles into visual repositories of identity and worldview.

Together, motifs and colours transform Tangkhul textiles into visual repositories of identity, spirituality, and worldview, making them a dynamic archive of cultural memory and continuity.

Tangkhul textiles create engaged repositories if motifs and colours collaborate to create visual vault of identity and spirituality

Traditional Attire and Social Roles

Traditional Tangkhul attire has been shown the application of textiles into both daily and ceremonial life. Male clothing consists of distinct upper cloth such as Haora Kachon, Luirim Kachon, and Thangkang Kachon, with the Malao loincloth is frequently donned in cultural performances and festivals. The clothing worn by Women's attire can be more ornate, including upper garments such as the Chonkhom and raivat shawls, and lower garments like the Seichang Kashan, phangyai, kamo kashan, Zingtai Kashan, and Luingamla Kashan, mansingla kashan, kongra kashan which are long wraparound skirts. The Muka, is another unique item of women plain black cotton usually worn as bustier during folk dance performance.

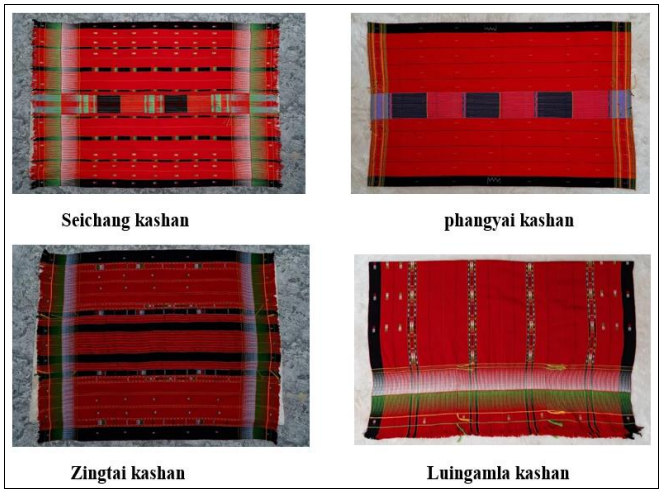


Image Retrieved from Our attire - Tangkhul Shanao Long (TSL) -

These clothes are traditionally worn during culturally important festivals such as weddings, religious ceremonies, and calendric festivals where their symbolic value is most

evident. For instance, in a marriage ceremony, specific cloths symbolized union and blessings.
In funerals, textiles carried spiritual meaning in the rituals of farewell wearing particular shawls or sarong not only signifies participation in community identity but also signifies one's position and belonging within the collective identity of the Tangkhul people. Thus, attire serve as a physical manifestation of intangible heritage and a marker of gender and status

Transformation and preservation
Tangkhul weaving practice have been decline in the past few years despite their cultural significance. Due to Modernization, priority have shifted from traditional skills the impact of Western fashion and change in living, in addition the availability of mass-produced materials which is cheaper and less labour-intensive has further overtaken handwoven cloth. The laborious nature of loin loom weaving, combined with the decline of traditional craft such as cotton spinning and natural dyeing, has been deterred the younger generations from learning loin loom craft. Traditional expertise has been gradually disappearing as a result of commercial competition from power-looms and synthetic textiles.
However, elements of consistency remain deeply embedded in social existence. The backstrap loom still continue in many house-hold especially for ceremonial purposes. Traditional attire still displayed during weddings, festivals, and religious rituals, reaffirming their meaningful role in cultural expression. Motifs and colours retain their ability as convey of memory and identity, while textiles are not part of daily attire. In recent years, revival initiatives led by local artisans, cultural organizations, and artist' societies have attempted to sustain the craft by imparting method of weaving to younger generations. Some efforts also experiment with incorporating Tangkhul motifs into contemporary fashion, in keeping with wider developments in sustainable design. Tangkhul textiles will remain everlasting carriers of identity amidst external influences since, weaving has evolved beyond a craft to grow into a symbol of cultural resilience and resistance to standardization to people.

Discussion and Conclusion
The review shows that Tangkhul textiles are intricately interwoven in cultural identity, functioning as more than practical objects. In earlier times, weaving was intertwined with social standing, tradition and gender roles, while motifs and colours encoded symbolic significance that acted as unspoken texts of culture. In this sense, Tangkhul textiles can be considered as repositories of indigenous knowledge, preserving histories, values, and cosmologies for future generation.
At the same time, the extinction of weaving traditions under the pressures of modernization, the growth of mass-produced fabrics, and changing lifestyles reveals the fragile state of this intangible tradition. The extinction of cotton spinning and natural dyeing practices further illustrates the fragility of knowledge transmission. However, continuity persists through ritual use of textiles, the eternal power of motifs and colours as cultural carriers, and weaving at household-level that all sustains to community memory.
Recent revival initiatives have been shown resilience pathways. Local artisans and cultural organizations are being taught to weave by regional artisan, while contemporary designers are attempting to integrate of traditional motifs into sustainable fashion. Such approaches not only preserve heritage while also adapt it to modern setting, linking Tangkhul textiles to broader global discourses on sustainability and innovation in cultural innovation**.**
In conclusion, Tangkhul textiles represent both decline and resilience. They remain essential carriers of identity and cultural memory, despite the disruption of their customary as their action. Ensuring their existence requires a balance between adaptation and preservation and honouring traditional knowledge while reimagining its role in modern design and future that are sustainable.

Summary of literature Review

Sl no.	Author and Year	Area of study	Target group	Methods	Findings
1.	Sochanphy A. Shimray	Manipur Ukhrul district Tangkhul community	Tangkhul expert, weavers, and elders	Qualitative, interpretative and ethnographic	Textiles serve as both expression of identity of folk community spirituality and history
2.	Vareikan & Ellen (2021) [5]	Manipur Ukhrul District	Tangkhul community weavers	Descriptive	Tribal identity hangs on beautiful costume however the indigenous weaving is declining due to advent of christainity
3	Joymati Thoudam & Ritu Mathur (2018) [4]	Ukhrul Tangkhul naga tribe Manipur	Different age groups from diverse background in rural and urban areas of Tangkhul tribe	Qualitative	Traditional textiles seen changes in terms pf design, motif placement, colour and yarn
4	Ngvule Gugu Kemp & Mamtha G Hedge (2024**)** [6]	Local communities and weaving centres across the region	Interview with naga weavers, artisans and community leaders	Field study Literature review	Community members concerns about the declining interest of younger generation collaborative initiatives (weaving centers, training, market linkages) aim to sustain practices
5	Mhonyani Sangma (2018) [15]	Ethnic group inhibiting in Nagaland north east.	16 naga tribes and sub tribes A total 479 sample were selected from different age group	Interview and observation	The introduction of christainity and British colonization bought changes in traditional Naga practices; animist customs and feasts of merit lost social value symbolic restrictions on shawls and ornaments were relaxed overall, traditional cultural identity weakened.
6	Dr. Ashis Kumar Pradhan (2019) [13]	Innovation of traditional textile art and crafts in	Artisans of Northeast	Secondary data analysis	Mention the loss of craftman, industrial competition and lack of access to market Suggests training centres, workshops, Emphasize sustainable production using

		Northeast region India			natural dyes and techniques.
7	Ankita Sharma, Geetima Krishna & Kime Bune (2021) [1]	Northeast region state Handloom	North east weavers	documentation	Northeast handlooms faces challenges due to limited exposure and modernization the tribal women play a major role in production, providing economic agency opportunities exist for revival through entrepreneurship. handlooms have potential for sustainable and luxury fashion markets.
8	Vishali & Bablu Singh (2024) [11]	Textile and fashion industry India	Artisan consumer fashion designer	Historical analysis/literature review	traditional textiles enduring power cultural heritage and craftsmanship; revival addresses sustainability, fashion industry navigates the challenges of the digital age globalisation and sustainability
9	Roy *et al*. (2024) [10]	Handloom and handicraft situated in Dimapur district of Nagaland India	Field observation and interaction session with local weavers and master craftsmen	Primary and secondary data	Gamification disseminate oral narratives of indigenous textiles. Storytelling tailored to each community's traditions is essential. Future iterations should involve participatory co-creation with communities and design process
10	Kemp & Hedge (2024) [6]	Naga community / Nagaland north east	stakeholders and experts in fashion, anthropology, and cultural studies informs the iterative design process.	mixed-methods approach, combining ethnographic research, design workshops, and collaborative partnerships with Naga artisans and designers.	Modern women's wear collections integrate Naga motifs and patterns Collaborative process has fostered social cohesion and economic empowerment within the naga communities

References

1. Sharma A, Krishna G, Bune K. Legacy of Design; Motifs of Northeast Handloom and its Future. Invest India. 2021..
2. Shimray SA. Decoding the Tangkhul Naga Folk Textile: An ethnobotanical and ethnozoological analysis of plant and animal motifs. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts. 2024;12(5):187-195.
3. Shurman A, Qaqish R. Traditional clothes around the world: A cultural reflection. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science. 2024;29(12):1-4. https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2912020104
4. Thoudam J, Mathur R. Impact of modernisation on tribal textiles and costumes - The Tangkhul Naga tribe of Manipur. Textiles and Clothing Research Centre e-Journal. 2018;2(4):25-31.
5. Varekan AS, Ellen AS. A tribal identity: The traditional costume. Mahratta. 2021;6(1):1-7.
6. Kemp NG, Hedge MG. Back to Naga loom: Preserving Naga textile and its traditions. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts. 2024;12(5):882-884.
7. Hodson TC. The Naga tribes of Manipur. 1911.
8. Ramkumar B, Dias RM. Sustaining traditional textile art among the Indigenous Nongtluh women of north-eastern India: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. Fashion, Style & Popular Culture. 2021;8(1):1-28.
9. Chudasri D. Co-creation through design process for reviving indigenous knowledge about traditional textile patterns. 2019 Oct 3-5. Conference paper.
10. Roy S, Singh PP, Padun A. A system design approach of gamification for disseminating intangible oral expressions of indigenous textile heritage. International Journal of Serious Games. 2024;11(2).
11. Vishali, Singh B. The resurgence of traditional textiles in 21st century fashion design. International Journal of Home Science. 2024;10(3):32-36.
12. Chowdhury N. Cultural sustainability in fashion: Weaving heritage into modern design. Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research. 2025;12(7):921-924.
13. Pradhan AK. Innovation of traditional textile art and crafts in North East-India. International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development. 2019;3(4):1193-1197. Available from: https://www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd25100.pdf
14. Hegde M, Kemp G. Rejuvenation of Naga textile and development of contemporary women's wear. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts. 2024;12(5):671-679.
15. Sangma M. Symbolic meaning of Naga traditional clothing. International Research Journal of Social Sciences. 2018;7(1):1-6.