

# CLOTHING

## IMPHAL, MANIPUR

Visual Ethnography of clothing

DRS report

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## ABSTRACT

While doing my undergraduate studies in Fashion, I was fascinated to learn about fashion subcultures ( e.g.: Goth, punk) and how they evolve. I began to wonder if India had any such street style subcultures and what are the factors which influence those. In India, there is an urban crowd with social media accounts, who is aware of global trends who makes very similar styling choices , there is another crowd influenced by bollywood and there is another set of people who are least aware of fashion or trends. This group of people, most of whom are rural sometimes come up with the most unique ways of dressing and have a very personal style. I have always been fascinated with the way women from North-east parts of India dress. Northeastern traditional attires are quite elegant and unique. The women seems to have an effortless sense of style. So as a part of DRS, I would like to understand the factors which influence the way the women of Manipur chose clothing. Further, I would like to study how they balance traditional influences, global and local influences to alter the way they dress.

## **ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELDWORK**

Anthropology is the study of science which deals with the study of man and its environment. Man does not reside in a laboratory and hence fieldwork becomes crucial in this. It enables a student to go beyond the horizon of his own society and perceive an alien culture. Field work enables a student to be part of another culture and lets one try to understand what it is like to be a part of that culture.

## **SELECTION OF SITE**

Langol village in Imphal west was the centre of my study. This village has a homogeneous ethnic group, where a specific sense of identity is maintained on the basis of common dialect and culture. The village has a compact settlement and a close knit community which makes it easy for student to collect data.

## **TIME AND DURATION**

The fieldwork was conducted from 8th December to 26th of December for nineteen days. It was conducted by staying in the village as a guest at one of the villager- Bliss's home.

## **TECHNIQUE OF FIELDWORK:**

Various anthropological methods and techniques were used during the field study. The first knowledge of that particular society is known with the power of observation. It means the examination of phenomenon or a thing without altering it. In this process many secrets norms value and descriptive account of community are observed. As I couldn't understand the language most of the time I was a silent participant in their daily affairs. I would start my field work at around 9, every morning. First few days were spent at getting acquainted with the villagers. I also visited the anthropology department of DM college, Imphal and took guidance of Prof. Arundhati Meibam in how to go about the research. The villagers were informed of the nature of my study and I would visit their homes and take part in their lives. Through interviews I would extract information and decide the next course of action. Everything was documented as notes, photographs and sometimes sketches.

# LANGOL

(ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE)

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Map of Langol and way to Imphal Bazaar

# LANGOL

## (ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE)

### 1.1: LOCATION OF VILLAGE

Langol is situated in Imphal west district on the south western foothill of Manipur. It is about 18 km away from Imphal. It is ½ km away from the game village and NIT Manipur (which is under construction). Major landmark of the village is Shija hospital, one of the best private hospitals in Manipur in terms of facilities.

To reach Langol from Imphal center, one can take private autos which will charge around Rs. 200 or the share cabs which are crowded, but take only Rs. 10. The road from Bazaar to Langol is broken and not black top. According to the villagers it was broken in the flood of 2015. Its mostly dusty and about 18 ft in width and one will have to protect yourself from the dust raised by passing vehicles.

### 1.2:-BOUNDARY OF VILLAGE:

Presently, the village is surrounded by Shija hospital in the east, NIT manipur site in the south, game village in the west and uninhabited hills in the north.

Below : View of game village and langol from the langol hill  
Right: Settlements in Langol





### 1.3:-VILLAGE TOPOGRAPHY:

The langol village settlement have an altitude of village is 3350 ft above sea level. The village is a type of hilly land.

#### 1.4: ORIGIN OF VILLAGE

The very first day after reaching Langol, I met the gatekeeper. Dr. J S called by everyone as Dr. Jugi. He took us around the village, introducing us to people. He would be greeted by almost everyone there and he would introduce them to us. He took us up the hill. As we walked the windy hill path towards the top, he told us a story

*“ The story of Manipur dates back to around 2000 years. Manipur always had enough food and resources for her people and people lived together happily. Even today Manipur has enough food and shelter for it’s people that you won’t find people begging on the streets.*

*Soon after people started moving across and living in isolated mountains. What isolation did to language was that the dialects developed and they became indistinguishable even to each other. They wore costumes to mark themselves as distinct from each other.*

*And then one day a scholar from Bangladesh came to teach the kind Hinduism and the ruling family adopted the religion. This led to forceful conversions to Hinduism and destruction of traditional scripts, language and scriptures. Bengali script began to be used, there was sanskritization of language etc. People used to worship space before that and some of them still do. All of these customs were taken away. Hindus were told they were superior to the rest and there began the beginning of unrest in Manipur. Much later, the when the british came and they had a hard time gaining*

*foothold Manipur due to difficult terrain. They sought alliance from locals and thus they ended up having to fight each other. There began further animosity amidst the groups.*

*Further, the introduction property laws lead to further turmoil. Now that the world economy is shifting towards south asian market India needs Manipur, since Manipur shares it’s border with Myanmar, the much needed friendly trade route for India. Thus there is a sudden increase in the interest from the Central Government towards Manipur. There is sudden development. According to him, there is change, he still wasn’t sure whether that equates to development.*

Langol is mostly a community of Thangkul Naga tribe who settled there around 30 years ago when the hospital was established. Before the settlement, the area was mostly uninhabited marshlands and mountains and small lakes which would connect to all the way to Lohtak lake according to villagers. Before moving to Langol, the people were living in Ukhrul district of Manipur. Ukhrul is a land of beautiful mountains and is famous for the state flower of Manipur- Siroi Lily. Villagers are proud of belonging to the Naga tribe and they are proud of their beautiful homeland. Many of the younger generation has never been to Ukhrul, but will tell you of their beautiful hometown Ukhrul.

### 1.5: HYDROGRAPHY

The Langol village mainly used water from the bore well pipes. There are no pipelines which connect and supply water to the houses. People, mostly children, carry water in pots and walk up the hilly terrain and fill the water tanks in their homes. Most of the homes I went to did not have pipes. Water was a very precious resource. Not due to scarcity of availability, but due to scarcity of supply provisions. Villages use water sparsely. Taking a bath is done in less than 1 bucket of water. Water is frequently reused. For example, everyone dips their hand in the same bowl of water to clean their hands after food in which the plates are also washed. Women clean their face with just a wet piece of cotton. December was cold, hence the water had to be heated. Water was heated in a pot. Sometimes the locals use the ice cold water and are tolerant to it.

## 1.6: TRANSPORT

The Langol village has a land transport system which is carried out by the auto service. The shared autos are parked at the Thangmeiband- Langol road intersection and runs upto bazaar (near Ema market, Imphal) via rims road. Between 7 am and unto 7 pm, you will always find 1 or 2 share vans weighting for passengers. There is no bus or single passenger auto services. In this village there are few cars, few bolero s and vans but two wheelers are more common. But majority of the people walk or use public transport. And they walk often for hours. When you ask people how much time does it take to get to some place on foot, most of them would tell you it is nearby and walkable and you would end up walking for an hour. It is considered normal. It costs Rs. 10 to go anywhere using these services.

## 1.7: COMMUNICATION

Telecommunication services are also functioning in this village. Mobile network has been received in this village not long ago. Many mobile network like Airtel, Aircel, Idea, Vodafone, BSNL, Reliance are also working in the village. Due to the availability of mobile facility, landline telephone user is decreasing. Television signal is also available in this village. Some of the houses have television sets with TATA sky, dishTV. Radio is also another common means of communication. Internet has really good connectivity. The house holds with teenagers are shifting from television sets which need to be updated to a laptop and entertainment through internet using smart phones. Postal facility is also available in this village. Newspaper likes The Sangai Express, Hueien Lanpao and The times of India are read. In every house you visit, people would bring in a register in which you have to write down your name and number.

### 1.8: VILLAGE STREET

A broken road with dust and cracks runs through the heart of Langol village from north to south. The road is about 1 km in length and its breadth is about 12 ft. The drainage system is open and a cause for concern among the healthcare community there. Sewage from every household is well connected and falls into the common drainage system which runs along the road. But it is open and not cleaned often and with the advent of plastics and throw away culture, the health workers are finding it more and more difficult to keep the households safe from mosquitoes. Because of the poor drainage, mosquitoes breed and most houses use mosquito nets to sleep.



Above: Langol street



Above: Inside B's home. It's a one room house where they cook, dine and sleep in the same room.

Below: Langol, the path uphill

### 1.9: HOUSE TYPE AND SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Almost all the houses of the Langol are beginning to be concrete made. Some of the old settlements are still Some RCC buildings are observed in the village. Houses of Langol are scattered mainly around the central hill between the Y shaped road surrounding the church. There is a cemetery to cremate the dead at the end of the settlements, closer to the mountain. Along the road, one will see the hospital, houses ( mostly mansions of hospital staff) shops, mostly small rice hotels, 1 stationary shop, embroidery shop, and a kids day care center. It is quite common to see day care centres in Imphal where women often earn their livelihood by setting up shops. Most of the houses are oriented toward the east and it is compulsory for every house to make a door orienting toward east. There is no house whose faces turn towards west in the hill settlement. Many of the old houses are bamboo thatched and then plastered. The roofs of most houses are of asbestos.





Houses in Langol



### 1.10: CLIMATE

The climate and rainfall is often same as moderate climatic condition of Imphal valley, but as a hilly area it is slightly colder. I was in Imphal for the winter. Temperature ranged from 4 to 25 c. Sunlight enters the east facing room by 6 am and the weather gets less chilly by 9.30 and air darkens by 5.30 pm and night and cold falls by 6.30 pm. Most of the houses used a coal kennel to warm the body till they sleep. The presence of these coal hearths (meiphu) in shops is considered the first symbol of approaching winter by the locals. Some houses have wooden flooring and they use electric warmers. But since electricity is not very predictable, they aren't common. People sit around the single hearth after work. This is a time for socialisation more than dinner. People sleep on wooden cots and mattresses. People wear woollen sweaters, sleep with 2 layers of blankets on the bed, and 2 layers of blankets above them.



Above: The coal hearth around which family huddles around in the evening and talks.  
Right: Water being heated for bath



### 1.11: FLORA AND FAUNA

The village is rich in flora and fauna. Big trees, bamboo as well as small sized herbs and shrubs of various species can be seen in the village. Some people in addition to vegetable gardens keep hibiscus and bougainvilleas at the boundary of houses.

Almost every house has a guard dog. The dogs aren't bound or kept in a kennel. They roam around the house and barks at strangers. They were not friendly towards people. Presence Some livestock like chicken, pigs, fish farms, rabbits etc are quite common.



Left: Pets

Below: The chick which was nicknamed chikchik by the family who owned it

### 1.12: IMPORTANT PUBLIC PLACES:

#### (a) Schools:

The students go to Imphal west town schools

#### (b) Playground:

There is playground, which lies in the centre of this village, outside the church. . Annual sport meet is held after Christmas every year. Its area is about 100 m long and 50 m wide. The children mainly play football in this ground. Unlike, the popularity of cricket in the rest of India, it is quite common to see adults and children playing football as you travel around in Imphal

#### (c) Marketplace:

There is no market place apart from a few shops at the main road. The villagers mainly go to the Imphal Bazaar for shopping as well as selling their goods. There was no vegetable shop visible in the village. Vegetable gardens were quite easily found in every house. And ingredients of food is largely dependent on the seasons.

#### (d) Hospital:

There is no primary health centre in this locality. The villagers depend on Shija hospital or the RIMS ( Regional Institute of Medical Sciences) for health care.

Top: Church  
Bottom: playground



(f) Electricity:

Electric facility is there in this village. Each household has an electric connection but the power supply is not very regular in the village. Inverter, solar lamp, candles and rechargeable lamps are commonly used in their respective houses to fulfil electric needs.

(h) Police station:

There is no police station in this village itself. Langol is under the jurisdiction of Lamphel Police station which is at a distance of two and half km from the village. The village enjoys a very harmonious and peaceful atmosphere. Compared to the Imphal town where you see a policeman at every block and corner, there is a visible absence of police.

(i) Burial site:

There is a burial ground in the eastern side of the village. It covers about 1 acre villagers of the Langol, buried their deceased people and no outsider are allowed to bury their corpse in the village cemetery. But it is also a place where teenagers come and hangout. While I was there, I have on many occasions seen teenagers sitting on the cremated stuff drinking or chatting.



Right: teenager knitting while sitting on a gravestone at the burial

# PEOPLE

## (DEMOGRAPHY)

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# THE PEOPLE

(DEMOGRAPHY)

## 2.1. ORIGIN OF THE PEOPLE

According to folklore, the term Tangkhul comes from the name of a mighty warrior, Tangku. He was an extraordinary warrior and an accomplished master of dance; he had many admirers and followers, not only among the hill tribes but also the Meiteis. The Meiteis coined the term Tangkhul for his followers (khul – village/cave). (Zingkhul, 2000)

## 2.2 TANGKHUL NAGA

Tangkhul is a Naga tribe living in the Indo-Burma border area occupying the Ukhrul district in Manipur, India and the Somra Tangkhul hills (Somra tract) in Upper Burma. Despite this international border, many Tangkhul have continued to regard themselves as "one nation". The Tangkhuls, as with other tribes on the hills, came to Manipur, Nagaland, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh from China through Myanmar entering their present habitats in successive waves of immigration. Culturally, the Tangkhuls share close affinities with Meiteis of the Imphal Valley. Even in Langol, one can see Thangkuls and Meiteis working in close association.

## 2.3. LANGUAGE

The Thankul people speak Ukrul dialect. They know Manipuri too, which is the official language of Manipur. Many of the villagers can speak English. Some educated persons can also speak Hindi. Few of the young people understand Korean too through the popularity of Korean Pop. A few numbers of people can also speak some other dialects too.

#### 2.4: STATUS OF WOMEN

There is no caste or classes in the society. Every person is equal in the society and the society follows patriarchal system. Men and women both contribute to the economy of the household and women enjoy The status of women is remarkably high among the tribe ( similar to other north-eastern tribes) and they honoured for their role in the family and their accomplishments. They have the same status as men and suffer no discrimination on account of sex. Widows remarry without any stigma.

The freedom women enjoy here is envious. Women can be seen talking loudly, laughing, triple riding motorcycles. One would see women running most of the shops and walking in the streets without anyone staring at them. Women are allowed to be out at night. The girls in my house would often go out for films at night with other women and come back after nightfall and face no stigma. There is even a shawl called Rose woven in memory of woman who was raped and killed by the army.

However, it is looked down upon to expose one's legs. Also, in public vehicles, there would always be a slight gap left between women and men by men. And there are clearly demarcated places for men and women to sit.



## 2.5: FOOD AND DRINKS

The main food of the people of Langol consists of rice, meat, green leafy vegetables, fruit, fish, and spices. In Langol village people have 2 meals a day, lunch which is eaten around 10 am and dinner is eaten between 6.30 to 8 pm. Dinner tables are generally low in height.

Chilly, garlic, onion, ginger, spices are essential items of their daily use. King chilly chutney is made separately by grinding it with onions and added to the food as per requirement. The fruits and leafy vegetables changes during months according to their availability. Lemon is eaten with salt after the meal to gain Iron according to my house tenant. And thaiching is eaten after the meal to reduce the effect of chilly in your stomach.

The villagers enjoy tea, coffee and other fruit juices. Every morning and evening the villagers enjoy black tea or coffee with biscuits. Hot lemon juice is another common drink. In Langol and the rest of Manipur dairy products are not commonly used. The lactobascillus for the diet (which comes through dairy products in the rest of India) are added through fermented fish which is added to every dish. The quantity of rice eaten is large.

On Christmas, special dishes with Bamboo is made which is rare because of the decreasing Bamboo forest in Langol according to the

villagers. In addition to this, church gives sweet fried Rice Roti- called Naga roti.

The Rice (chaak) hotels in the street serves Shinju ( a type of spicy salad), bora ( a type of chana preparation) and a kind of puri.

In the Naga wedding similar food is served. Rice, green peas dal, leafy vegetable, pork curry and a piece of fruit.

There is no restaurant culture in Manipur. People don't go out to eat often. Eating out is done mostly as a part of 'programmes'. Restaurants do not provide you with drinking water unless you ask for it. Alcohol is banned in Manipur, but it is not difficult to find alcohol.

## 2.6: RELIGION

The Thangkuls of Langol follows Christianity. During the pre Christian era they followed religious practises based on animal sacrifices. The community of Langol lives closely with the church. The pastor is considered an important person and every new person in the community has to meet with the pastor. Pastor's quarter is the one sign post in the village. Every year a group of villagers along with the pastor goes on prayer group trips.



Left: Pastor of the church, Bliss and S Chaun at a blessing ceremony

### S Chaun

The house I was staying in had a girl who according to her had runaway from a village in Assam closer to the border of Bhutan. She was maybe 13 or 15 according to her. She has 3 sisters and 2 brothers and her parents were not ready to send her to school. So she had been going to school by staying in a relative's house. She said 'mummy' ( B) had come to her village to preach christianity and she saw an opportunity to get an education and left her village without telling anyone. Bliss has promised her a school admission, but she will have to start from class 5 since she is going to join an english medium school. She speaks hindi and doesn't understand Manipuri or the Tangkhul dialect. B learned hindi to interact with her. Right now, she takes care of the household work and is waiting for her opportunity to join school. But she has to have her baptism before she can go to school. She was renamed S Chaun by the pastor. Her real name is Gaya. She said she liked the freedom in Manipur where she doesn't see young girls being forced to get married. She also liked the cool haircut and the style of Al, Bliss's daughter, and got one for herself from Al.



Above: S chaun at work

### 3.6. FAIRS AND FESTIVALS:

The villagers go to Ukhrul if they want to attend traditional naga festivals.

#### Christmas:

Christmas is one of the most important festivals in Langol among Thangkuls. The celebrations start on 24th night with a mass and goes on till New years. A week before christmas eve, villagers gather in different carol groups of around 30 people and goes to houses to collect money for the celebrations. Carols are festive occasions where people, especially youngsters dress up in new clothes and sing.

On the day of Christmas villagers gather together in church for prayer and then the playground for the grand feast and various games and cultural activities. They construct a small stage for dancing and singing. There even hold some small auction for food items during christmas.

Other major festivals include Easter Sunday, Good Friday, Palm Sunday,



ABOVE :Outdoor games on the church ground on christmas morning



CHRISTMAS



ABOVE : Tea and naga roti are provided after the morning mass. Elders dress in traditional clothes and younger generation mostly dresses in Kpop styles.



ABOVE : Women returning home after christmas mass. One can see the dustbins kept by TDSL for making Langol cleaner in the picture

## 2.7. OCCUPATION

Thangkuls are traditionally farmers. They even engage in carpentry. Now most of the men work as construction workers or drivers and women are shopkeepers, beauticians, roadside vendors etc. Every house has a woman weaving and amidst the community some are identified as skilful weavers. The woven material is sold in the Imphal market. Baskets and bamboo furniture are made by elderly men and sometimes women join in the preparation of raw materials.

## 2.8. LITERACY

Most of the people can read and write. Completing school education is considered important by the villagers. B's daughter was struggling to finish her 12th standard. She has been getting offers for modelling and marriage proposals. But her mother says, "she has to first finish her education. She can then do whatever she wants to.

## 2.9: MARRIAGE

Generally there were two types of marriage acceptable to the society, arranged marriage and love marriage. This type of marriage is a marriage that the daughter of the brother has to marry the son of the sister. Cross cousin marriage is called Pamla marriage among the tribe. Marriage within the same clan is not permitted and is considered incest. Most of the marriages were love marriage in the sense that

the young people choose their partner as they like but always consult with their parents. Boys and girls who like each other go on dates called as 'programmes'. They mostly go to cafe Nikheel or for a movie.

Being a patriarchal society Nagas place a lot of importance on virginity of the bride. I attended the blessing ceremony of a couple who had eloped and have a 1 year old son. Even though there is not a lot of stigma attached to people who bear children outside of wedlock, B told me, 'Our weddings are generally conducted in the church. but since in this case, the girl is not a virgin, they can't have a church wedding. So the blessing ceremony is conducted at the community hall. It is attended by the entire community. And the decoration of the hall is done by the youngsters using balloons and ribbons. Food is quite simple.

### A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ALISHA AND BLISS

I lived with B, Al and S Chaun in their house during my stay in Langol. B is in her late 40s and is a single mother. She earns her living through the small shop she runs inside Shija hospital which sells coffee, biscuits and basic essentials for the patients and visitors.

Al is her daughter who is in 12th standard and is about to turn 20.

B says proudly that Naga women wake up very early in the morning. She also says that she has to be at work by 9. B wakes up around 6. Takes care of the cooking. Cleaning and other chores are done by S chaun. She then goes to work at around 9.30 or 10.30 depending on how cold and slow the morning is. She leaves the shop open and comes back around 10.40 to have brunch which is rice and curry. She then goes back to work and return at around 5.

Al goes to school by around 8 and reaches school by 9. She and her friends don't carry a tiffin box. They eat from the school canteen and sometimes carry thangjing (fox nuts) and chew them during classes.

Since her school was closed in December, she would wake up around the time B leaves and stays in bed watching series and browsing internet till around afternoon when her friend arrives. She doesn't take part in the household chores. Since her hand suffered from a fracture while she was young, she cannot learn weaving

and she is sad about that. In the evening Al generally goes out with her friends for a film or to walk around bazaar. They come back after dark, much after B reaches home. Then B, Al and S Chaun all sits around the hearth and talks about their day. They then have dinner around 7 or 8. After dinner they watch some Korean drama on Al's laptop or listen to songs on Al's phone. Sings, talks and goes to bed by around 9-10.



# CLOTHING

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## CLOTHING

The Tangkhul tribe associate most of their traditional textile with strength and bravery. Both motifs of weapons and colours like black and red have prominence. Phorei (spearhead) is considered the most predominant motif in Tangkhul textiles. Their costumes mostly consists of shawls and phaneks (wraps). Today, traditional clothing is worn only during festivals and wedding ceremonies. Older generation wears blouses and regular plain phaneks during normal days. Younger generation mostly wears hallyu( korean pop) fashion clothes during festivals. Other days they wear pants and tops and dresses.



Above : Chongkhom being woven on a waist loom  
Left : Shop at Eema market which sells dyed yarns for weaving

### 3.1: WEAVING

Traditionally every Tangkhul woman possesses the knowledge of weaving. It is the mother's responsibility to teach her daughter the art of weaving. Most of the households still use the loin looms to produce clothes and the women weave for the requirements of the house. It's a common sight to see women sitting and weaving outside their homes after 11 in the morning, once the household works are settled.





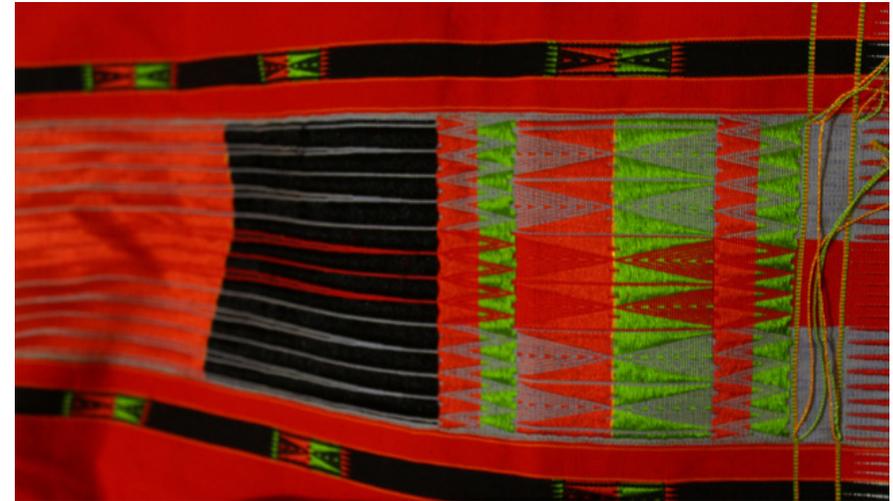


P

P is a very soft-spoken woman in her 40s and living with her ageing parents. She speaks English fluently and when you ask her what she does for a living, she says she doesn't do anything. She did not study much etc. But she then says she looks after her parents and has chickens and pigs and a small vegetable garden through which she makes some money. She also helps out in the nearby chaak hotel run by her friend. She showed me pictures of people weaving different styles. She clicked them at some weaving expo she attended and she is interested in improving her skills. She initially was being photographed in her brown sweater when she suddenly said, 'make me famous by putting my picture on the internet. But hold on, if you are putting my picture on the internet, and people outside your college are going to see it, let me get ready. So the second picture of her is after she got ready for a picture.

### 3.2: COLOR & DYEING

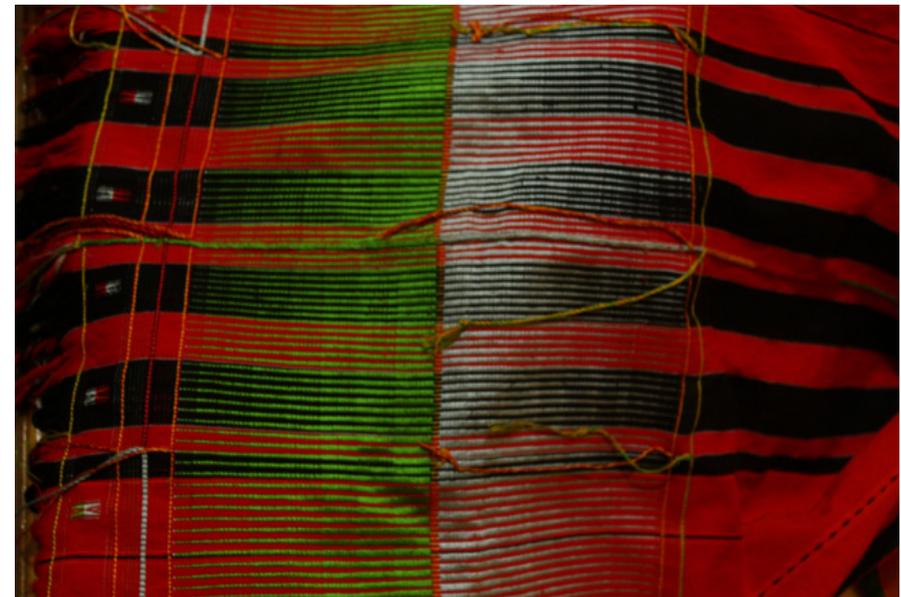
Red is the predominant color in their textiles and as mentioned earlier, it denotes bravery. According to the locals, Kaborei, the natural dyeing agent grows abundantly in Manipur and comes in red and black colors. Interestingly, only older women are allowed to dye the color red for they considered dye harmful for young girls. As in the case of weaving where men are forbidden to weave, the Tangkhuls forbid men to dye colors for they believe it will affect their hunting skills. But nowadays, they buy the dyed yarns from ema market.

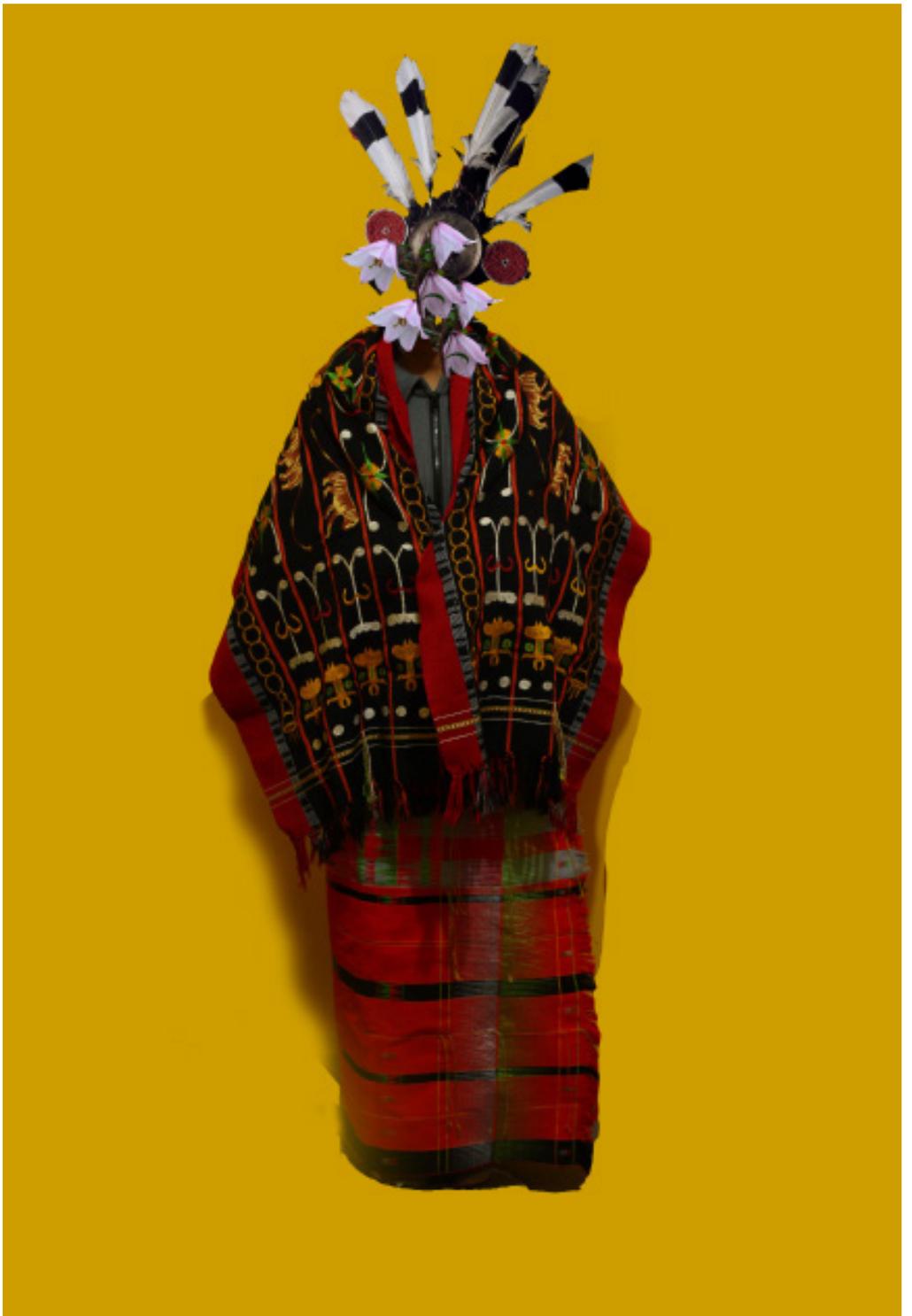


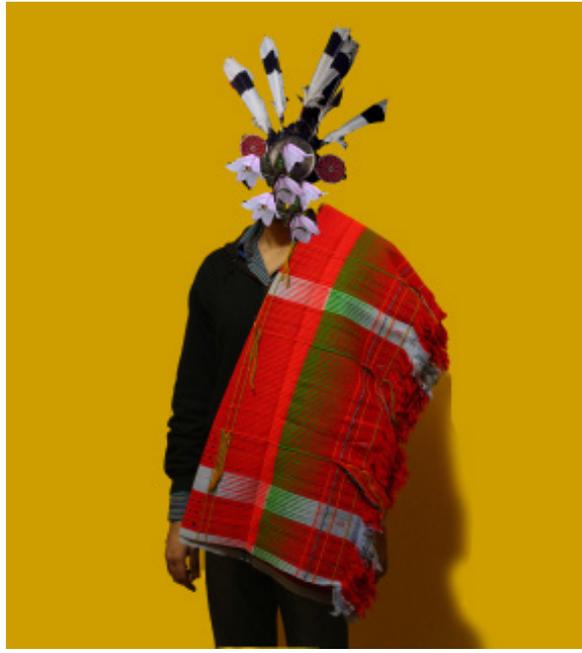
### 3.2: MOTIFS & ORNAMENTS

The motifs are usually designed to look like mirror images. The spearhead motif known as Phorei is the most important motif of the Tangkhul Naga and is found in almost all their textiles. It denotes bravery and strength in men while in women, it denotes beauty and grace. Chingchala motif represents the pillars in traditional Tangkhul houses. Other motifs include the atengkhe (cheek of bird), Tashet Tathe or popularly Thabi Maru (cucumber seed), thamoleikap (crab) and more.

The Tangkhuls ornaments point to the association of their forefathers with the seashore. Most of the ornaments of the Tangkhuls such as kongsang, huishon, etc. are made of sea shells, cowrie and conch shells a prominent feature of the people who live on the shore.







### 3.4: TYPES OF TEXTILES

#### **WOMEN:**

i) Kong-ra-kasan (size 103 x 134cm)

It is a sarong for funeral ceremony; kongra-rivulet, kashon-phanek. It has a pattern depicting boat in a rivulet. The two ends have double row of phorei motif in two colors; white bands interwoven with red and green designs run lengthwise in the central part.

ii) Phangyai kasan

A variety of Thangkul phanek with the pattern of Harakhan (throat of a bird) and Chingchala (prolonged house pillar).

iii) Phuirei-kasan (size 106 x 148 cm)

It is a phanek with spearhead motifs on the two ends; the body of the cloth has designs representing an insect of the bee family, locally known as "khuata Shen". However, the Tangkuls of Kason Kullen interpret it as Thamoleikap (crab).

iv) Seichangkasan

It is a bridal phanek, red coloured with black borders. It has elaborately designed panels and spearhead motifs decorate the borders.

v) Kamo Kasan / Khrute / Kangkum (91 x 162 cm)

It is a phanek, originally worn only during dance;

vi) Thang-kan-kasan

It is a black phanek, with small cricket motifs along the red border and with spearhead motifs at the two ends.

**vii) Moga**

It is a simple black cloth with no designs, used by the women while dancing.

#### **MEN:**

i) Howra (size 124 x 220cm)

Also known as 'Larum' by some sections, it is worn as shawl by men.

ii) Lei-shat-kachom

It is a shawl made by joining two strips of cloth together. It has bottle and spearhead motifs.

iii) Niha

It is a simple red cloth with no designs and is used by men while dancing.

#### **UNISEX**

i) Khaui-lang

It is used both by men and women; has small cricket motifs all over.

ii) Aphor-kachon

A shawl used by both men and women, it has a white base and modified spearhead motifs scattered all over. The design has a dark to light effect which is achieved by changing the closeness of the weave.

iii) Chong-khom (128x212cm)

It's a shawl, predominantly red in color which is made by joining four narrow bands of fabric together; solitary phorei motif dot the entire shawl.

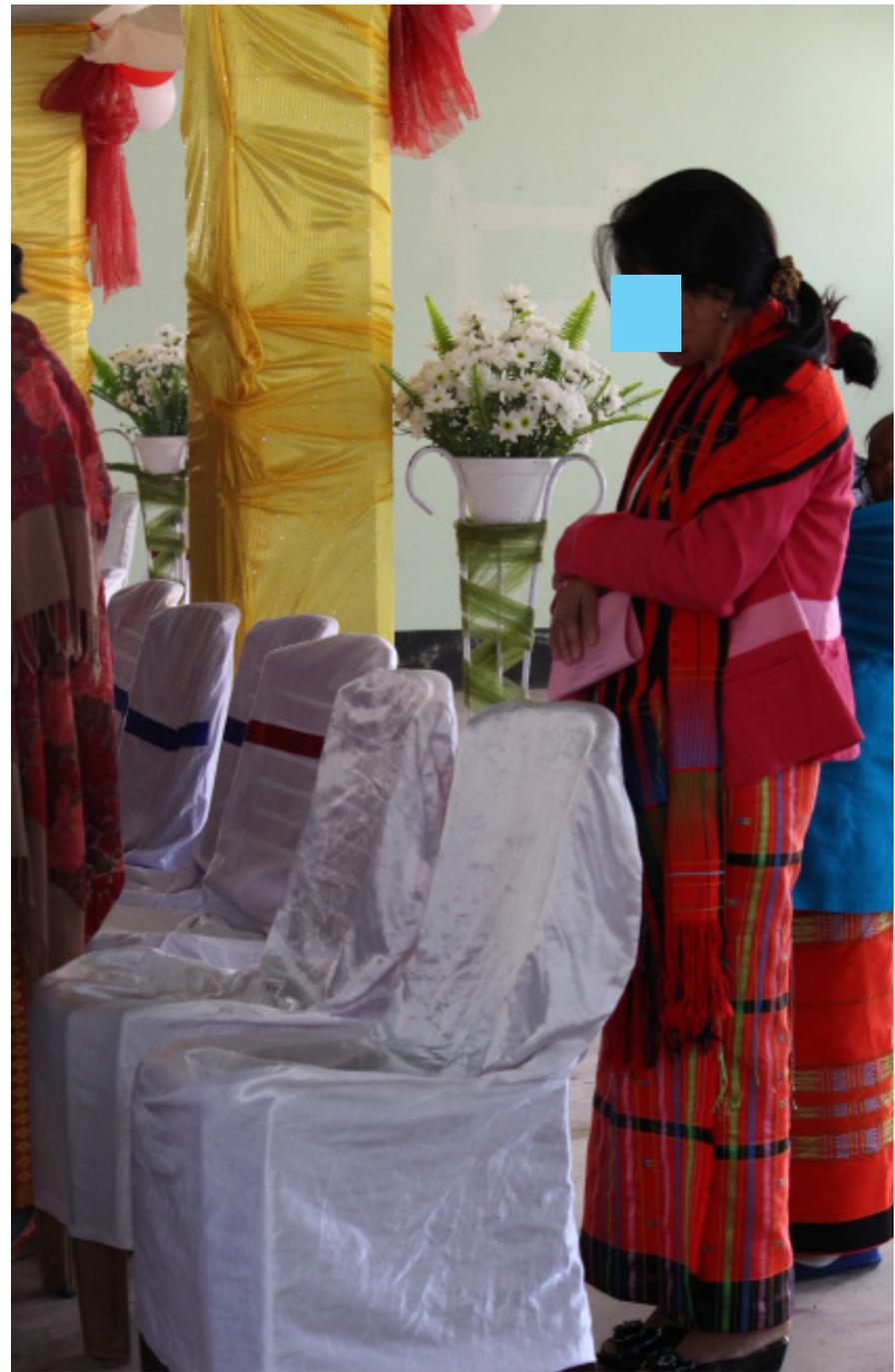
## BLESSING CEREMONY

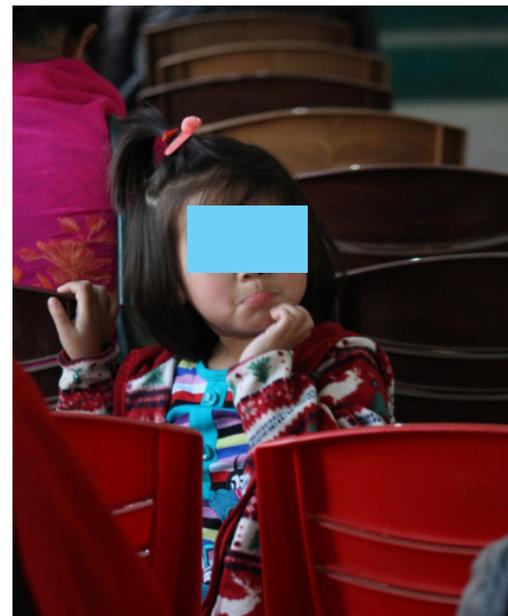


Youngsters who are considered as 'stylish people' by B and N.  
Teenagers mostly wear Hallyu inspired clothing for ceremonies.



Married young girls wear a mix of traditional and modern garments.





Above: Child of the bride and groom, on the day of blessing ceremony. He is dressed in a suit.

Top and bottom right: Girls dressed to attend the blessing ceremony

Previous page: Inside the blessing ceremony hall



Above: Prints are very rare in Manipur. They aren't part of most of the traditional textiles.. This woman has worn her traditional phanek with a printed blouse, and a kashmiri shawl  
Right: Women dressed to attend the blessing ceremony





A woman stands in a village setting, wearing a light blue knitted hat with a red flower on top and a beige shawl with pink and red floral embroidery. Her face is obscured by a blue square. The background shows a dirt path, a white car, and buildings with corrugated metal roofs. A blue circle on the left contains the text 'OTHER TRIBES'. The bottom of the image features a pink and white striped graphic.

OTHER  
TRIBES

Apart from Thangkuls, Langol is also home to Meiteis and Kabuis( Rongmeis). I have visually documented the clothing styles of them too. In Langol they all live peacefully and depend on each other. They invite the other tribes to their weddings and functions.

## KABUIS & THEIR TRADITIONAL TEXTILES



Kabuis are Nagas. These are the traditional Kabui clothes which are woven at their home for sale in markets. Above is the Kabui chief and on the right is the weaver.



## MEITEIS & THEIR TRADITIONAL TEXTILES



In this page: Meitei Inaphis and Paneks and various draping styles.



### J Sorokhaibam

She is around 70 and is from an upper middle class Meitei family in Langol. She spent her youth away from Manipur, mostly in central India, with her husband who was a pharmacist with the army. On returning to Manipur, she decided that she wanted to fulfil her mother's wishes of her becoming a Manipuri singer. So she waited till her last grandson passed class 10 and was 'settled' in life and then decided to pursue her mother's dream for her. She was around 65 then. She started relearning the songs and started performing at ceremonies with a troupe. This performance is called palla. She is busy with her troupe and practise and performance. She says it keeps her busy and helps her forget worries of ageing. She spent a couple of hours with me explaining the various kinds of traditional meitei textiles. All the while it was interesting to see her being able to touch fabrics and tell what material it is, if the fibre is from Manipur, if it was woven in Manipur etc. This kind of sensitivity towards origins of textiles can be seen in people I interviewed in Imphal.



In this and next page: Meitei women dressed for a function (opening ceremony of indigenous festivals)



Above, below: Meitei women at eema market

CHILDREN



## Children

Children in Langol, like the rest of Manipur are carried on the backs by both men and women. In Langol, most kids would speak their dialect and a few english words. Even the children who doesn't speak English would often come forward, shake your hands and say hi to strangers.

Children, as well as adults, address strangers as 'brother' or 'sister'. They often take care of themselves, help in the household work and goes to school. Most of them come and play in the ground in front of the church. Unlike in cities, children are not often accompanied by adults, while they are in Langol. They form their own groups and always have a presence in Langol (Imphal in general). It is not unusual to see children with coloured hair and very individualistic haircuts.





Top right: Young child washing her own clothes in the morning  
Bottom right: Children watching football match at the ground



Left: Boys playing games on their phone outside the church. Notice the haircuts  
Bottom: Children getting ready for sunday mass at church.





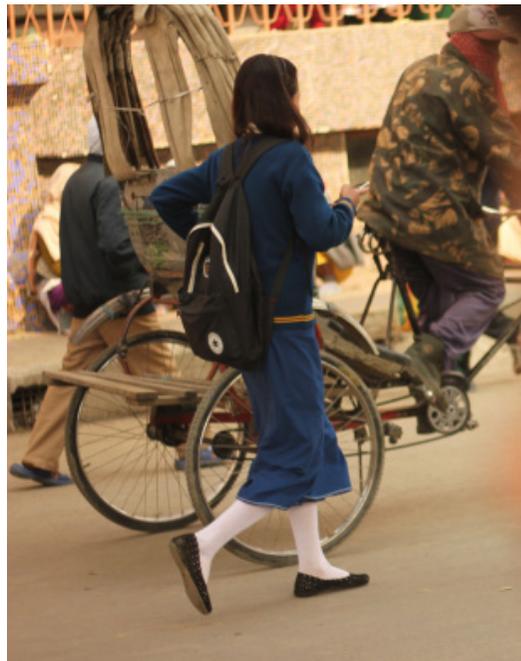
UNIFORMS

## UNIFORMS

Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) is an underground organisation which wants to revive Manipuri culture. They have been trying to force Manipuri script on public boards. In 2002, they forced school and college students of Imphal to wear Phaneks as a part of their school uniform.

School uniforms in Imphal are unlike any that I have ever seen. They not only integrated the traditional costume, they also have colours that are generally not seen in school uniforms. Bright blue, pinks, and golden yellow school uniforms can be seen all around Imphal. But this is not the case in the hill districts of Manipur. For example, in Churhandpur, school girls wear short skirts and shirts as a part of school uniform. And the locals of Churhandpur feels that Imphal is more conservative owing to the presence of Meiteis and hence such rules on clothing.

Even with these strict rules on uniforms, you can see how girls still manage to customise their uniforms. They would add heels, wear bright makeup and decorate their hair with innovative plaits and ribbons and bows.



# KOREAN HALLYU WAVE



ABOVE : Young man watching Korean drama at the Eema market amidst the sales.

Hallyu is a Korean word and it means Korean Wave. Hallyu refers to Korean music, drama, film, and even fashion and cuisine that have swept the world since the late 1990s. Bollywood was banned in Manipur in the 90s. Exactly around the time when television was becoming a presence in every household. At the time, the entertainment void was initially filled with south Indian and Bengali films. But it couldn't sustain the youth's interest as they found they have little in common with these cultures. Airarang TV, a 24-hour network from Seoul started airing in Manipur at this time. Soon the youth of Manipur was mesmerised by the Korean culture which bore a lot of similarities to their own.

“Koreans have close knit families like us. The food is quite similar where they use fermented fish to add flavour. They give a lot of respect and focus on family ties and ... we sort of look more like them, than Indians..” said Ni while I was asking her about why she thinks Manipur dresses like Korean Hallyu fashion now. Several other people raised this point with the same apprehension while I was talking to them. That they look different from ‘Indians’. They would tell me stories of how ‘Indian’s’ respond when they find out the Manipuris are not from China. This sort of alienation and isolation they face from the rest of India is a common story for people of Northeast I spoke to.

Even the adults now enjoy Korean films and are addicted to the Korean serial which are aired on television. One can see Korean film CDs being sold on the road side. In addition to the exposure to Korean pop culture the

markets have also undergone a shift which has probably contributed to a change in clothing styles.



ABOVE : My lovely girl and The scholar who walks at night, 2 series AI and B would watch during every night before sleep



This page : Ai and her friend's kpop idols whose style they follow through instagram and facebook and try to copy.

Counter clockwise from top:  
 Girls generation( pop band),  
 Bae Suzy (singer),  
 Krystal Jung (TV actress),  
 Kim Yoo Jung (actress)





MARKET

## MARKET

Eema market, Gambhir arcade and Paona plaza are the major destinations for shopping clothes in Imphal. People depend on eema market for clothes of daily use. It is a meitei women's market. Hence the other tribes consider women's markets of their own tribes as better places to shop for clothes. The Thangkul women say Meitei market has more conservative and less stylish clothes. Eema market now mostly is filled with clothes from Myanmar. Earlier we used to sell clothes from Dimapur too. But if you touch the clothes you can tell that they are of much lower quality and higher price. People chose the foreign goods now. So we also are shifting towards them. Gambhir Singh Shopping Arcade was established on July 17, 1998. The mall is a four-storey building with different plot sized shops. Unlike Mumbai and Delhi, it is not own by one proprietor or retail guru. Every shop owner is the owner of his own shops or plots. This place is filled with clothing from Thailand and Bangkok. Here you will get high quality, high style garments at costs which are around Rs. 2000. To buy the same thing from metros in India, you will need to pay around Rs. 8000.



## EEMA MARKET



Eema market clothes section



Ema market. This shop is owned by 3 sisters. It sells undergarments





Eema market. Woman choosing shoes for her child



Eema market. Shop for traditional Meitei jewellery



Ema market. Fashionable shoes for women. A lot of them are with heels that are 6 inches (and more) taking in account the demand



Eema market. Tribal jewellery is sold. They cost around 200 Rupees.







# SECOND HAND MARKET





There are several second hand markets in Imphal which has used clothing from Hong Kong, Thailand etc. They are extremely high quality and high style products which are sold for around Rs. 1000. People buy it, wash it and use it and they are as good as new. This market has everything from clothes, to jackets to socks and caps. Upper and lower middle class, educated and uneducated people come there to shop. There is no stigma associated to these clothes in Manipur.

CULTURE OF BORROWED CLOTHING



Above: Meitei wedding

### CULTURE OF BORROWED CLOTHING

The second hand market is not the only place where you would find reusing clothing is acceptable. I had the opportunity to attend a Meitei wedding. The bride's costumes and most of the jewellery in a Meitei wedding are rented.

I also got to visit bridal boutique run by designer L. This studio is run by a NIFT graduate. He makes western christian bridal gowns which are worn by most of the young tribal brides these days. His bridal gowns costs around 20,000 rupees. But they can be rented for around Rs. 8000. Most of his clients tend to prefer renting them.



Hallyu fashion



### Hallyu fashion on the streets

I have captured photographs of Manipuri youth and asked them questions on their style influences. Most of them did not know if there were any direct influences. Some of them are on instagram and follows Korean pop idols for style inspiration. They were introduced to Korean pop culture through family and friends. All of them shop from bazaar area of Imphal.

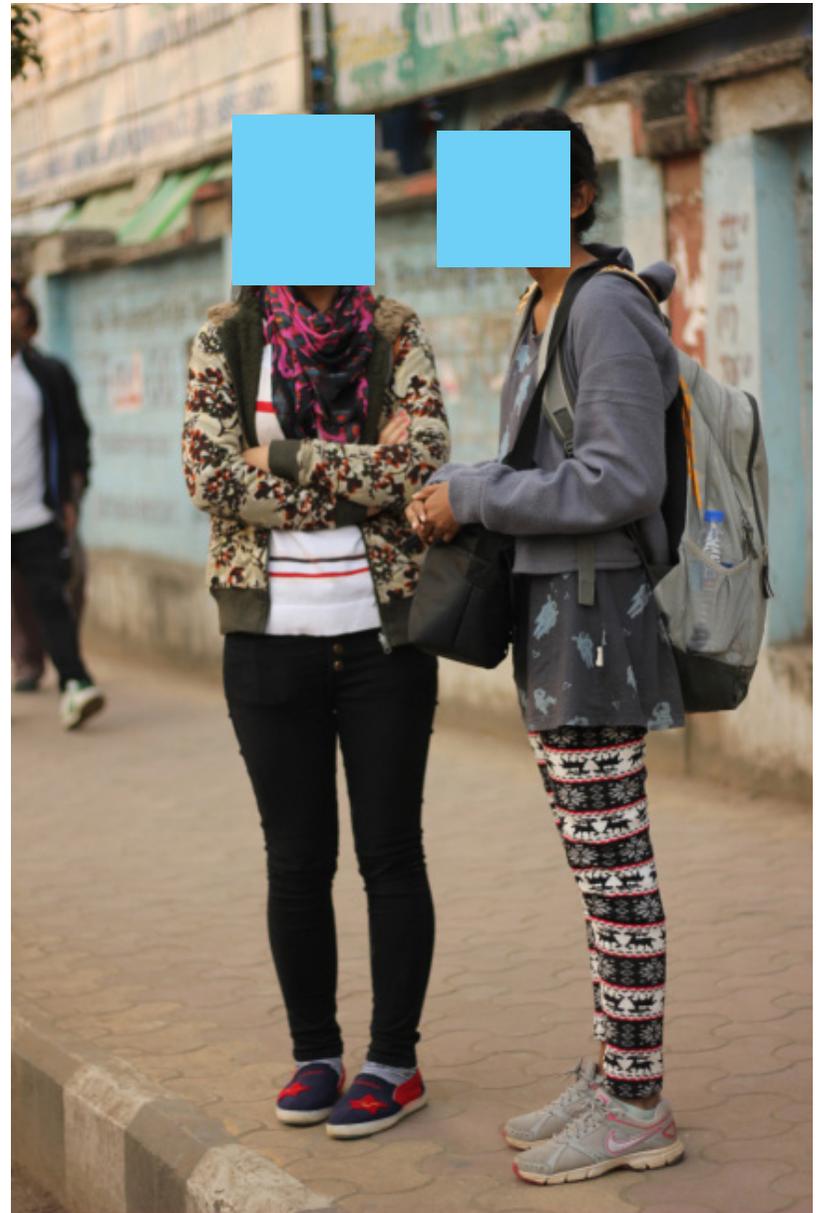


This page: Kpop inspired hairstyles at MU, Tall red heels is a must for most women in Langol during festive occasions. One can see them running up the difficult hilly terrain of Langol in heels.



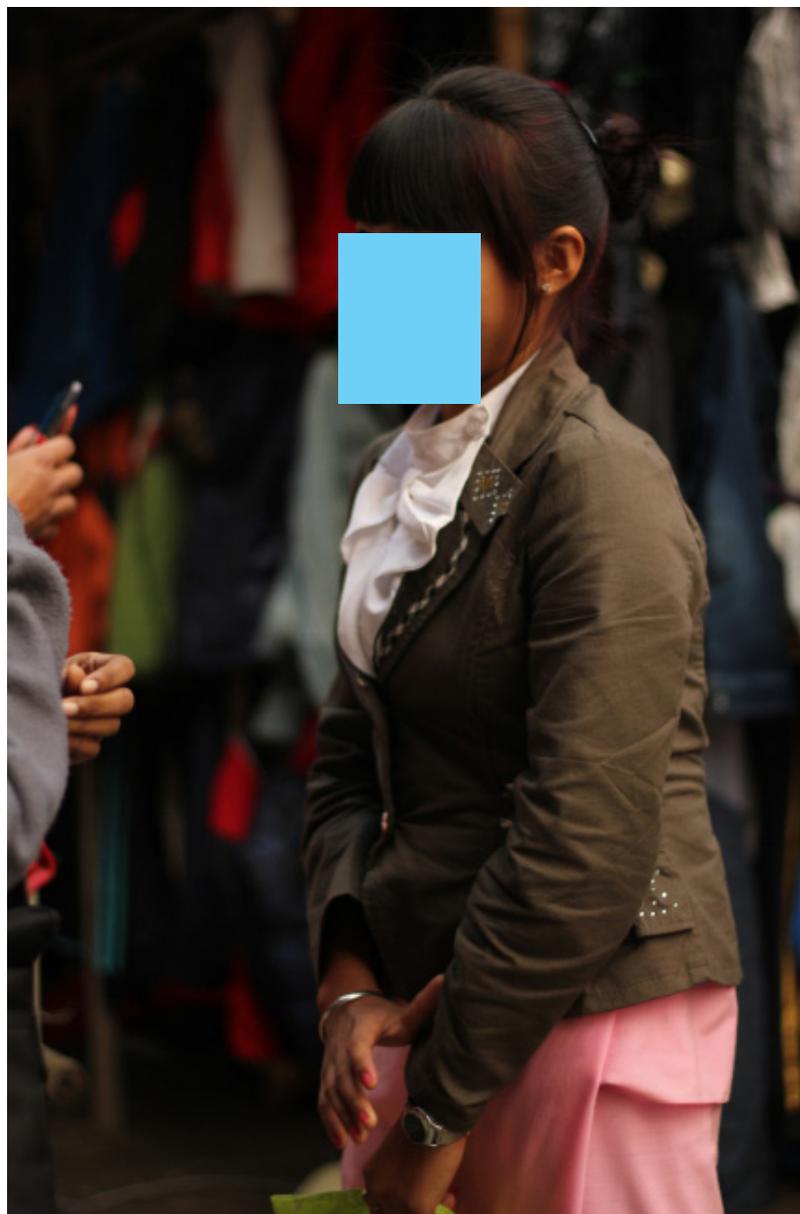


This page: Kpop inspired clothing, MU student



Above: Meitei sisters. Despite belonging to one house, the elder sister likes traditional clothes and the younger one wears western clothing







Above: The traditional snake motif of Meiteis adapted for a tie  
Left: Bright colored footwear is quite popular amidst people of Langol (and Imphal). They pair it up with their pop colored clothing (be it traditional phaneks or hallyu clothes) and socks



Above: Dressing at Langol  
Right: Skull patterned glove and sling



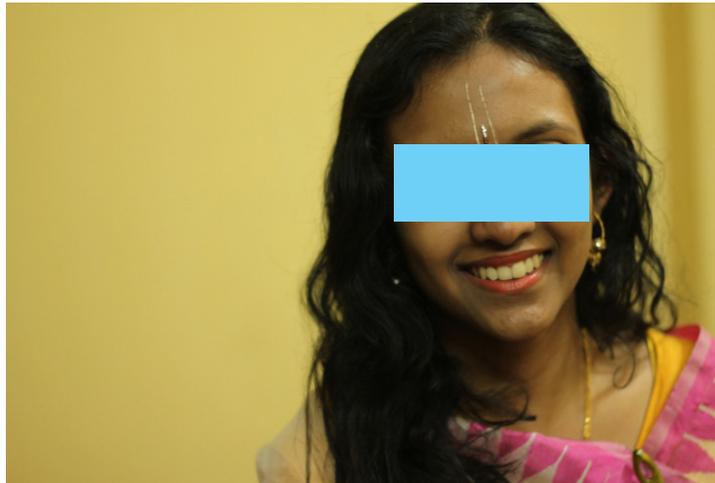
Perceptions of  
beauty

Beauty care is part of the daily life in Imphal. Red lips is seen as a sign of beauty. And accentuating the lip color using makeup is not looked down upon. Even children wear red tinted lipstick at times.

The small tea shop attached to Shija hospital sells basic essentials like food and washing powder etc for getting through a hospital stay. In addition to those, this shop sold several lipsticks and face creams of Oriflame. I would often come back from my field visits and see B and AI sitting around the hearth, discussing what they like on the new Oriflame catalogue or the latest clothing on some Korean drama that AI is watching. Make up was nothing to be hidden. I have seen women shaping their eyebrows and running small beauty parlours outside temple in the open.



Above : Giant hoarding of a beauty contest for 9 to 13 year old girls at Imphal Bazaar



When I attended a Meitei wedding, I was asked to get ready for the wedding. I applied a bit of Kajal and a thin layer of lipstick. The hosts of the wedding were not happy with the results and some 3-4 women started working on my face without any delay. A lot of red lipstick was applied. Hair had to be open but straight. They were quite happy with the end results. And suggested me to wear tall heels to complete the look.



Above : I met this girl at the blessing ceremony in Langol. She initially did not want to be photographed because she believed she was not fashionable and not beautiful.

Right : Pictures of bridal makeup being done by a professional makeup artist at a Meitei wedding. For the wedding makeup, transwomen are considered to be the talented makeup artists and are in demand. They know the 'modern makeup' according to people. They do contouring to highlight cheekbones and nose.





Left and above : These are pictures of the same woman. She was resting after work at the eema market. When she noticed me clicking pictures, she slowly took out her dentures from the jar next to her and put it on. She then fixed her hair and smiled for another picture. She said, she likes the second picture of her as she finds it more beautiful.