

A Study on the Lotha Naga Customary Practices: North East India, Nagaland

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Abstract

To learn more about how customary government helps keep culture living and communities strong, this study looks at the Lotha Naga tribe in North East India. People from this area are called Lotha Naga, and they are a unique group. The study carefully looks at the past, governing structures, decision-making processes, and ways of adapting to new situations to explain how the complicated Lotha Naga traditional government works. A lot of the work that was done shows that traditional leaders like village heads, elders, and councils help keep cultural practices alive, settle disagreements, and bring people together. The study talks about ways to include and show everyone. It stresses how important it is for everyone to be able to agree on what should be done and for the community to be involved. The study also looks at the issues that the old way of running the government has, like how the population changes, how economic and social forces affect the system, and how outside influences can affect the country. Giving communities more power, helping them learn new skills, helping them deal with new situations, working together, and giving them official approval are some ways to keep and improve the traditional system of government.

Keywords: Lotha Naga tribe, customary administration, indigenous governance, cultural preservation, community resilience, traditional leadership, decision-making processes, adaptation mechanisms, challenges, recommendations.

Introduction

The Lotha Naga people live in a beautiful part of North East India, Wokha; Nagaland. They have a rich culture and history. The green, rising hills and valleys of Naga state are real, and they are also very important to the people who live there and their culture. For a very long time, the Lotha Naga people have taken great care to keep their customs and ways of life alive [1]. They now see these things as important parts of who they are. The Lotha Naga live a very active and strong life.

Their dances have a steady beat, and they are very good at making things. Their culture includes caring about nature, believing in stories, and telling stories. Although things change quickly, the Lotha Naga people work hard to keep their art and culture alive. Technology and outside forces have made changes, but they haven't stopped [2]ⁱⁱ. This shows how much they value old ways of doing things and knowledge that has been passed down for a long time. The Lotha Naga family's long past gives them strength and comfort. Instances like Tokhu Emong traditional festival and important ceremonies they hold when they plant their crops for the first time make this clear.



Figure 1 Map of Nagaland [3]ⁱⁱⁱ

It's a strong tradition that has been passed down and updated many times. Lotha Naga people are also open to new experiences. Their interest lies in things that happened in the past. They don't sugarcoat things and are open to new experiences. In Lotha Naga culture, farming methods are always changing, and old art styles are used in new work [4]^{iv}. Two examples of how old and new ideas can work together in Lotha Naga society. There's something magical about learning about the Lotha Naga. This document displays both how they used to live and how their community has transformed through time. There are many stories about how the Lotha Naga people stuck with things even when things got tough, from the time they were magical babies until now [5]^v.

They are very determined because they keep their customs alive even when things are hard. It's more important than ever to keep this culture alive for future generations as we learn more about their long past. Even though the world is becoming more globalised and culturally homogenised very quickly, strangers can still make our lives better. One group like this is the Lotha Naga. People can get through hard times because they have faith, customs, and a way of life that they stick to. The Lotha Naga are more than just a group of people. They also have a very long history. When we get lost in their world, we need to remember our own past, how we see ourselves, and how everyday life changes.

The Lotha Naga Tribe: A Cultural Pillar

The Lotha Naga are a group of many types of Naga people. Indian people in North East are more interesting to live in now that they have their own customs. The Lotha people have lived in the wild parts of Nagaland for a very long time. The place will always have a different social and culture history because of what they did [6]^{vi}. The Lotha Naga people live in the hills and water of Nagaland. They're a proud and strong group. These people have changed the history and the way the area is now. People know them for being tough and skilled. A Lotha Naga group has been around for a long time. These roots show that the people of Nagaland have been strong and determined, even though the land is rough. A tribe leader and the spirits of ancestors say that they came from far away to the Naga hills and valleys in search of safety and wealth. The Lotha people had a tough time, but they built strong towns that did well in their new, green land. It brought a lot of their past and culture with them. This helped the people there get along. They have worked very hard for many years to build strong towns and take care of their families [7]^{vii}. New traditions, customs, and ways of life began to form among the Lotha people as they got used to their new home and became more connected to the land.

These things showed that they were close and had a past together. The Lotha Naga people changed the way people lived and thought for a long time. This history shows how strong they were. People in Lotha are very connected to the land they live on because their way of life is based on farming. Because they have been doing it for so long, the Lotha Naga people are very good at farming in Nagaland's tough soil [8]^{viii}. The Lotha people are known for farming on steps. It lets them turn rough hills into green fields. They make sure the bases are flat and level so that as much water as possible stays in and the soil doesn't wash away. For generations, these slopes have fed the community by making the best use of arable land and making it a healthy place to grow. Some of the most important foods in Lotha farming are millet, rice, and maize.

They are grown with great care and respect for their cultural value. In Lotha society, rice is highly valued because it stands for plenty, wealth, and sharing meals during holidays. An important part of the ceremonies and rites that honour the land and its harvest is growing these crops as a spiritual practice. In farming, holidays and traditions mark the changing of the seasons and add a little variety to the farming year [9]^{ix}. At every step of farming, from planting seeds to gathering harvested goods, ceremonies are held to appease the spirits of the land and ensure a good crop. These traditions strengthen the community's connection to the land and give everyone a sense of why they are all there. Lotha villages stay together and their economies stay strong thanks to farming. Shared tools and community work make sure that no one gets left behind. They also get people to work together and help each other. Farming is the most important job in Lotha society because it makes people healthier and enhances the social and cultural life of the community [10]^x.

People from the Lotha Naga group use the crafts they make to make their homes and daily lives look nicer. People have been making these projects for a very long time and have a lot of experience with them. Skilled makers are often looked up to by people in the area [11]^{xi}.

This group of people use everyday things like bamboo, cane, and wood to make a lot of different things. The Lotha Naga group is known for having very good woodcarvers who use rough wood to make home art, food, and furniture. A "pvüchio" hat is made from bamboo and cane, but these materials are also used for many

other things. Lotha art is made from patterns and designs that have been passed down from generation to generation [12]^{xii}. They are based on stories, nature, and Native American art. They make each piece look nice and give it a societal meaning. These designs, which use geometric forms and mythical animals, show the Lotha Naga tribe's long history.

Combat sports have been around for a very long time among the Lotha Naga. They do it because they love their country and its customs. 'Eyata' and 'kholo' are not just habits; they represent the values of being disciplined, sticking with something, and working together. To be good at "Eyata" wrestling, you need to be quick, swift, and smart [13]^{xiii}. "Kholo" is a way to fight with a stick that looks at how strong, fast, and accurate you are. A big reason why many people learn these kinds of fights is to stay safe and protect themselves from enemies. They also teach kids good morals.

They make friends and feel like they are part of a group by following tradition and training. They learn how important it is to follow rules, treat others with care, and help each other. Lotha society is based on close friendships and group ties that make people feel like they belong and are cared for. The "morung" (a dorm for young people) and the "village council" are traditional groups that help people stay together and make decisions together [14]^{xiv}. People go to the "village council" to fight and talk about their problems. The "morung" is where young men can get training and learn from their elders. Lotha communities have celebrations, customs, and chances to work together and have fun as a group, like doing communal work. These things help to bring people closer together. It doesn't matter if the Lotha Naga people are working in the fields, going to religious events, or celebrating in their own way, they always help each other.[15]^{xv}

As long as they can remember, the Lotha Naga people have worked hard to keep their traditions alive. It is being worked on to record oral histories, bring back traditional practices, and encourage cultural education for the Lotha Naga people so that their past will be remembered for many years to come. To honour their ancestors, people keep their traditions living. Also, these customs help people figure out where they fit in a world that is always shifting.

Customary Administration: A Time-Honored Tradition

It's been a long time since the Lotha Naga had a strong way of running their own way of local governing system. It shows what the group as a whole knows and thinks because it has been around for a long time. It also shapes how they live together. This type of government is made up of customary rules, councils, and traditional leaders. An important part of community life is that it keeps everyone together, decides who is in charge, and settles arguments. The Lotha Naga group needs to follow a strict rule very carefully [16]^{xvi}. The last person on this list is the 'pvüthi' or village chief. They are in charge of the whole village. And there is also a subordinate member called "yingai" or assistant who were picked among the villager because they are honest and smart. They tell the village chief what to do. There is a village chief and an elder group that run the town. They watch over and lead the people with their help. This way of managing is based on laws and rules that have been passed down through the years.

These rules, which come from the cultural history and beliefs of the Lotha Naga people, govern who can own land, how to receive it, how to marry, and how to act in public. This is how things have always been done in this town, so everyone must follow these rules [17]^{xvii}. If someone breaks them, the village chief and leaders will decide what to do about it. Two of the main jobs of the traditional administrative system are to govern and make choices. The village chiefs and elder councils are in charge of making important decisions that affect the well-being and goals of the whole community.

Some of the things that these decisions could be about are public infrastructure and development, as well as internal governance and the distribution of resources. Leaders try to reach an agreement so that decisions are fair and reflect the interests and values of the whole community. Another important part is the traditional administration system's role in resolving conflicts. Every group has disagreements and fights, but the Lotha Naga have learned how to handle them [18]^{xviii}. Mediators like elder groups and village chiefs usually settle disagreements by trying to mend fences and bring everyone back together. Using customary laws and past cases as their foundation, traditional courts, in the presence of village elders, can be asked to hear and decide cases that are very hard or controversial. The customary administration system is important for more than just running the government and settling disagreements. It makes places bigger and keeps people in them. Through rituals, customs, and social events, the people who run the community try to make everyone feel like they are a part of the group. The system also makes sure that weaker people are safe and cared for by giving them warmth and help when they need it [19]^{xix}. Lotha Nagas have a government that is based on past

but can be changed. It changes based on what the people in the community need and how things are going. Leaders and experts are always adding to and changing the system while still following old rules and customs. It will always be able to solve problems in the present day. What makes the Lotha Naga people unique is how they run their government. There, morals, family history, and customs that have been passed down from one generation to the next are kept. Traditional laws are closely followed, there is a hierarchy of leadership, and the system's main goals are to run the government, settle disagreements, and keep everyone together. This keeps the community safe and calm. In the Lotha Naga tribe, there has been a form of government that works well for a long time. This has helped the tribe hold on to their history and sense of community as they've dealt with new issues [20]^{xx}.

Significance of the Study

To understand how the politics and society of the area work, learn about the Lotha Naga local government. If you look into this old type of government, you can learn a lot about how strong and tough the people of Northeast India are culturally. Other people can learn more about identity, government, and keeping practices alive by looking into the details of the Lotha Naga traditional government.

Purpose of the Study

The main point of this study is to look at the Lotha Naga traditional government from all sides, such as how it came to be, how it works now, and how it might work in the future. We are looking at the difficult customs of the Lotha Naga tribe to learn more about how local governments work. Finally, we hope that the study's results will help us continue to support and protect old-fashioned ways of learning as the world becomes more modern and connected. The Lotha Naga local government is more than just something you think about. This is how they show they care about their customs and ways of life. A lot of research will be done on the past of the Lotha Naga people so that their voice can be heard among the other cultures that live in North East India.

Historical Background

The Lotha Naga people have always cared a lot about Nagaland and the Naga Hills. For example, the history tells us how the Lotha Naga people got started and how their old government system came to be. It also shows how their society has changed over time. People from Lotha Naga have long thought that they came from a faraway place to reach the hills and rivers of what is now Nagaland. Stories were told about the dangerous trip they took through rough terrain and thick woods, where the ghosts of their ancestors and tribe chiefs joined them [21]^{xxi}. Over time, they moved to important places to make the most of the good land for farming and other natural resources there.

Their routes were affected by the weather, the chance to trade and make deals with other groups, and the need to stay ahead of other tribes in the area. They met new people from different countries and different ways of life because of the trips they took.

They mixed some old and new ways of life as they got used to their new home, which changed their society. Their farming was an important part of life because it let them live on steep mountains and keep a lot of people around [22]^{xxii}. They raised rice, corn, and millet, which gave them food and money and kept the village together and made life better for everyone. People from Lotha Naga were known for more than just farming. They were also good at arts and crafts. People in the area made intricate items out of things like cane, bamboo, and wood that they found. People saw the patterns and themes on these things as signs of pride and skill because they showed off the tribe's past and culture.

The Lotha Naga run their government in a way that comes from how they built their society and where they first lived. As towns and cities grew and got better, people needed ways to keep track of and run different parts of town life. People set up this type of government to protect national traditions and ideals, keep the peace, and settle arguments. At first, there wasn't just one person in charge of Lotha villages [23]^{xxiii}. They had elder groups and town heads instead. They were chosen to lead because they were honest, smart, and good at what they did. They had a lot of control over how their towns were run and where they went. Over time, social structures changed and ties in the community got tighter. The usual way of managing things was put down and made better so that it could handle these changes. The traditional way of running the Lotha Naga tribe was formed and changed over time by things inside and outside the tribe. The rules and ways of doing things in Lotha society changed over time as the economy and society changed and as the society and

economy interacted with nearby tribes [24]^{xxiv}. This past can help us understand where the Lotha Naga lived, how they moved, and what their way of life was like. The Lotha Naga people have always been very strong, flexible, and devoted to their homeland.

This means setting up a complicated form of traditional government and living in tents. Learn about this history if you want to know how the Lotha people of the Naga Hills in Northeast India became the people they are today and what they left behind.

Customary Governance Structure

Lotha Naga traditional government picks leaders and makes decisions using a strict method that has been around for a long time. As a result of these important groups, duties, and obligations, it is simpler to preserve community values, keep the peace, and settle disagreements. A "pvüthi" or village chief, is in charge and has a lot of power. The things are always at the top, like they always are [25]^{xxv}. pvüthi are respected by many because they are smart and know a great deal about how things work. They are also reliable and good at leading. Helping the local tribal people, which are groups of respected adults who are known for their knowledge and experience. The village chief believes that their assistant "yingai" can help run the village, keep everyone safe, and fix issues.

The "village council" and the "morung," which is a youth dormitory, are also ancient groups that play important roles in the government. Young men learn discipline, duty, and the importance of working together as a group from the teachings, training, and mentoring they get at the morung. The village council gets together on a daily basis to talk about and agree on issues that affect everyone. Before making big policy decisions, traditional tribal leaders get feedback from everyone in the community [26]^{xxvi}. This makes sure that the decisions reflect the tribe's shared values and priorities. We can make sure that decisions are fair and meet the wants and goals of everyone in the community by involving them. There are established ways to settle disagreements and fights, which keeps society peaceful and harmonious. Village leaders and elder groups act as mediators to help people work out their differences through talks and compromises. Traditional courts, called "Yichopen-ki". These courts make decisions based on customary rules and past cases.

The usual way the Lotha Naga tribe is governed is based on making decisions as a group, reaching agreements, and getting everyone involved in the community. This way of doing things keeps the tribe's traditional values of fairness, mutual respect, and justice alive, which is important for good government and social harmony.

Legal Framework and Challenges

This is what happens when the traditional way of running things for the Lotha Naga tribe meets the modern law systems in Nagaland and India: opportunities and problems. The Indian legal system recognises tribal groups and their customary rules. However, disagreements can happen because different courts have different views of the law and different areas of responsibility. One of the biggest problems is that there are both formal and informal government systems that operate at the same time. Each has its own instructions, powers, and rules [27]^{xxvii}. India has a legal structure that handles national law, government, and administration. Differently, the customary governance system manages what people do in tribal communities. Two sets of laws could lead to arguments about who is in charge, confusion about the law, and issues with making decisions and carrying them out. India's economy, culture, and environment are changing quickly in Nagaland and other rural areas. This makes things even harder. With urbanisation, industrialization, and globalisation speeding up these changes, they may threaten long-held beliefs, standards, and government systems. When native groups get used to new things, they may realise that their goals of becoming more modern and keeping their culture alive are very different. It might not always make sense to protect people's rights, the environment, give men and women the same rights, and support the constitution's rights and principles. The traditional norms and beliefs of indigenous groups are what make up customary rules. They must, however, follow the Constitution and deals made with other countries. Lastly, the Lotha Naga tribe combines old ideas, practices, and ways of doing things to run their daily lives. This system is needed to keep the peace and settle disagreements in the community, but it is having a hard time keeping up with how quickly laws and society are changing. The Lotha Naga and other indigenous groups can work with the government to solve these problems and protect their history and culture while still upholding and honouring their traditional ways of doing things.

Role of Traditional Leaders

It is very important for chiefs, elders, and groups in the area to do their things in the Lotha Naga customary government. They keep the peace, settle arguments, and protect community values based on how they lead, how much power they have, and how they do things.

Village Chiefs

In traditional societies, the village chief, or ‘pvüthi’ is seen as the most important person in charge. The village chief is in charge of settling disputes, making sure the community is safe, and running the village. They have a lot of power and duty in these areas [28]^{xxviii}. People look up to the Ekyung or pvüthi ‘chief’ because they are wise, respected, and know a lot about customary law and practice. They are also good at leading and honest. The village chief is powerful because of set rules and the support of the people. Even though they are in charge, they lead in a way that encourages collaboration and includes everyone. Village chiefs often ask councils, community members, and elders for help in making decisions that are in the best interests and ideals of the whole tribe.

Elders

The elders are respected by the community because they have served for many years and have a strong sense of right and wrong. They give the village chief counsel, advice, and help on problems of government, resolving conflicts, and the well-being of the community. People are usually chosen to be elders based on how long they have been involved in community work, how honest they are, and how well-liked they are by others.

Elders not only give advice, but they are also in charge of keeping culture practices, rituals, and traditional knowledge alive. Elders in the tribe who are leaders teach the next generation how to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. This keeps the tribe's practices and values alive [29]^{xxix}.

Councils

Each village chief and elder on the community council makes a choice with the other members. At these council meetings, people usually talk about things that are important to the public, like government and how to solve conflicts. Leaders try to get everyone to agree on what should be done so that decisions reflect the goals and values of the whole tribe [30]^{xxx}. To keep society together, settle disagreements, and keep fights from getting out of hand are all very important jobs of councils.

Table 1: Traditional Leadership Roles within the Lotha Naga Customary Administration

Traditional Leader	Role and Responsibilities
Village Chief (pvüthi/ekyung)	Oversees village affairs, resolves disputes, upholds traditions
Council of Elders	Advises village chief, provides wisdom and guidance
Village Council	Collective decision-making body, ensures community representation

Community Participation and Decision Making

At its core, the customary way of running things relies on the people in the community making decisions. Setting up ways for everyone to feel like they belong, are heard, and can make a choice is important for making people feel responsible and like they own the community [31]^{xxxi}. When we talk about the community, we mean that everyone takes part in making decisions, not just giving their opinion.

Open talks, conversations, and polls are ways for village councils and chiefs to find out what the people in their communities feel and think. Anyone can make decisions that include everyone, take into account the group's wants and goals, and are open to everyone. A lot of steps are taken to make sure that everyone is involved, can agree on something, and has a say [32]^{xxxii}. One of these steps is to include women, kids, and people from poor groups in the decision-making process. This will make sure that different points of view are heard and respected. Like village meetings and ‘morungs’ (youth dorms), these are also places where people can talk and get active in their communities. These groups bring people together by giving them a place to meet new people, make choices as a group, and build communities. A lot of the time, the Lotha Naga community makes choices by coming to an agreement. If village leaders, elders, and councils all agree on something, it should represent the goals and values of the whole tribe. Leaders bargain, talk things out, and

look for places where everyone can agree to get everyone to agree on a choice. Lotha Naga customary government is made up of traditional leaders who make decisions with the help of the society [33]^{xxxiii}. Traditional leaders support community values, settle disagreements, and work to bring people together through their positions of power and the way they lead. The Lotha Naga tribe and other indigenous groups can keep their own culture and way of life if they have self-government that makes sure everyone is included, heard, and agrees on everything.

Cultural Preservation and Adaptation

For the Lotha Naga group to keep their culture alive and adapt to new needs in the community, they must do things the same way they have always done them. For the Lotha Naga people to have a strong sense of who they are as an ethnic group, the customary governance system makes sure that old values, practices, and beliefs are kept alive. Social structures, traditions, and customary laws are used to make sure that people follow cultural rules.

It also makes sure that family stories are passed down from one generation to the next. Chiefs, leaders, and councils are just a few of the people who keep old traditions alive and safe. They help keep the national spirit alive in a big way. They watch over ceremonies, customs, and festivals to make sure that the Lotha Naga people are proud of their past. For the Lotha Naga, keeping their arts, crafts, and languages alive is very important. This is made sure of by the traditional model of government. Bringing these old customs back to life and supporting them helps the community keep its cultural identity [34]^{xxxiv}.

Even though it comes from the past, traditional government has shown that it can adapt to new situations and meet people's wants. The government has been updated and made to work better as people and leaders in the community have lived and worked in the area. Some things that used to be done a certain way, like how to settle disagreements, have been changed to fit how things work now. There are more modern ways for the village leaders and councils to settle differences besides mediation and arbitration [35]^{xxxv}. To be fair, they still believe in classic ideas like justice. The old way of running the government has changed to keep up with the new ways people can make a living and find work. They have pushed for a wider range of business and economic activities while still standing up for values and beliefs that are important to the culture.

Challenges and Future Prospects

This is how the Lotha Naga tribe's government is set up, and it has worked for a long time. But it doesn't work well in today's world. Big changes in society and the economy are putting a lot of stress on the old way of running the government. People are moving around. People who have lived in the same way for a long time may have to change their ways when globalisation and industry happen.

There is a chance that future generations will lose their cultural identity and the way they have always done things because they are more connected to and exposed to other cultures.

Migration, population growth, and more people moving to cities are all changes in demographics that put pressure on traditional types of government. As towns grow, they become more varied, which makes it harder to keep people together. People and businesses may not be able to use the old way of doing things because of issues like poverty, unemployment, and unfairness. Normal leaders might not be able to meet the needs of the community because they lack the tools or agree on what those needs are.

The customary administration system can be made more valid and useful by giving communities more say in how the government works and what decisions are made. Traditional leaders and community members can get better at running their communities, solving problems, and building them up by taking training and classes that build their skills. It's possible that the old way of running the government could work better with new problems if it's open to new ideas and strategies but still sticks to important cultural ideals. Other groups that are interested can give their knowledge and materials to projects that use traditional governance to help them. Getting to know people is one way to do this. It is important to fight so that regional and national legal systems accept and support the rules and ways of doing things that are already in place. This will make people respect and trust leaders from the past more. In order for the Lotha Naga tribe to stay true to their culture and meet the needs of their community, they need a form of customary government. Native groups like the Lotha Naga are now facing threats to their culture and way of life. They can keep going, though, if they work out their differences and make plans to keep and improve the way they've always run their government.

Conclusion

This study ended by explaining the Lotha Naga system of traditional government and how it helps communities stay together and protects their culture. The Lotha Naga tribe's traditional way of running their government helps them keep their cultural identity while dealing with modern problems.

We learned this by looking at the traditional ways of making choices, leading, and adapting. Native government systems need traditional leaders, community feedback, and adaptable plans to stay strong and up to date. This is what the study's main points stress. The Lotha Naga customary administration system stays true to customary rules, keeps old traditions alive, and encourages people to be involved in making choices. This shows how societal resilience and a sense of belonging work together. This study shows that tribal government systems are important for more than one reason. They keep traditional things safe and make communities better. Indigenous forms of government protect the traditional ways of life of indigenous people and give them the freedom to make their own choices and figure out their own issues. It is important to support and respect native forms of government like the Lotha Naga tribe's as the world becomes more connected and changes quickly. This will help with growth over the long run, cultural diversity, and getting along with others. Society can be more open and fairer if we use what native people have taught us and value and accept the different ways people live their lives.

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