# URBANISATION AND CULTURAL CONVERSION OF THE LOIS IN MANIPURI SOCIETY

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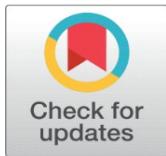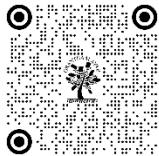
ABSTRACT

This demography study deals with spatial development and cultural change from the rural state of isolation towards integrating urbanisation by Lois people of Manipur, India. Their movement carries challenges as well as losses for cultural continuity with opportunities to be stretched culturally. As an ancient penal practice confined them to rural locales, the Lois people bear with special resilience as well as transformative capacity within their socio-cultural substrates. This research explores how urban migration has changed their traditional lifestyle and cultural identity, responding to a very important question of the case of traditional communities as the Lois negotiating and maintaining their cultural essence in the midst of relentless pressures from modernisation and urbanisation. The main aspects looked into are: how urban migration transforms the traditional socio-cultural framework of the Lois and strategies they use to maintain the cultural identity in an urban setting. This study investigates broader implications of urbanisation for indigenous cultures through comprehensive analyses of migration patterns, cultural adaptation, and dual dynamics of preservation and change.

Keywords: Lois People, Cultural Community, Resilience, Indigenous Cultures

1. INTRODUCTION

The Lois of Manipur is a historically marginalised group that was often confined to particular rural areas as part of ancient penal practices; indeed, this constitutes an exceptional case of socio-cultural resilience and transformation. This paper discusses the spatial distribution of Lois while evaluating their impacts of urban migration and analyses the cultural shifts that result from the increasingly changing socio-economic landscape. The transition from isolated rural areas to busy urban areas has a significant implication on Lois's cultural identity and societal roles within the community. It addresses the pivotal question on how traditional communities, such as the Lois, maintain their cultural identities within relentless pressures of modernisation and urbanisation. The key research questions include: What effects have been there from this urban migration on the traditional socio-cultural makeup of the Lois? What strategies have the Lois employed in pursuing and maintaining cultural identity within the urban sphere? This preface, therefore serves as a pathway to really delve into the relationship between migration, urbanisation and cultural continuity or transformation among the Lois thereby providing a more realistic look at challenges and adaptations triggered by their new urban realities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous work has often depicted the Lois community within the traditional rural contexts of Manipur, whose focus remains more on their demographic traits and culture. For example, studies conducted by Devi (2015) and Indira (2003) chronicle in great detail traditional practices, community rituals, and socio-economic roles within these contexts. It is worthwhile mentioning that these studies are quite crucially important for the detailed description of the Lois culture, including agricultural roles and traditional crafts. However, they tend to pay lesser heed to the dynamism of cultural adaptation that is usually triggered by urban migration.

This literature review critically examines and places into relief inadequacies of the existing body of research to account for the transformative socio-cultural dynamics the Lois contend with in the face of urbanisation. It identifies an important gap in understanding how Lois cultural practices change through post-migration experiences and develops a holistic framework to analyse indigenous urban adaptation strategies. Built by synthesizing insights from anthropology, sociology, and urban studies, this review builds a multi-disciplinary understanding of how such migration to urban areas has affected indigenous communities around the world, drawing similarities and differences in comparison with the Lois experience.

In this section, there is also a thematic analysis of migration studies that particularly and notably incorporates insights from Puketapu-Dentice, Connelly, and Thompson-Fawcett (2017), who discuss integrating indigenous culture into urban settings. Their work concerns the fact that, although much research has been oriented toward economic and social impacts of urbanisation, cultural or non-economic dimensions are far less focussed upon. Actually, migration carries deep cultural implications - controversial issues about changes in gender roles, traditional authority structures, and the transmission of cultural knowledge. The review appraises how urban centres are spaces of cultural hybridity where traditional Lois practices may encounter and mix with global flows of culture, and hence may even be born as new cultural forms and practices.

With this in mind, the review uses critical engagement with what is already available to open more angles on perspectives of cultural adaptation and resilience to delve deeper into the community's response in Lois towards urbanisation. It also sets out the need to adopt an integrated approach with regard to economic, social and cultural dimensions toward getting a more rational understanding of traditional adaptations in the urban context. More than that, this will bring to light not just challenges, but opportunities for cultural preservation and innovation within indigenous populations brought by urbanization.

3. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE LOIS

In the historical context, the Lois are observed settled in specific rural settlements as provided in the royal edicts for the maintenance of social order and administrative ease. It is discernible from the past decades that substantial migration occurred in the form of a vast number of Lois moving to urban centres, especially to the state capital-Imphal. Such migration has transformed age-old patterns of traditional settlement into dynamic and heterogeneous communities of cities, changing not only the rural socio-cultural scenery but also the look of the city.

The forcing drivers of this migration are multiple in natures and comprise both push and pull factors. Economically, land scarcity and degradation in the countryside force many Lois toward cities in search of better livelihood opportunities. As it is in these cities that there exist many varieties of employment options other than those they have in their traditional settings, such as jobs in the service sector, construction, and small-scale industries, promising higher incomes and standards of living.

Education also forms a vital factor in this population mobility. A need for higher education compels most of the youths of Lois from rural areas to migrate to cities where educational facilities and colleges are concentrated and considered to be of a better quality. This schooling migration often turns out to be a stepping stone for permanent urban settlement when the students decide to stay back in cities for greater professional opportunities.

Social considerations also affect the migrational flows. For Lois, the desire for a modernised life, healthcare facilities, entertainment, and an expanded social life attracts them to urban settlements. In addition, the trauma and restrictions of their centuries-old social life under the traditional institution are less binding on them when they are more anonymous and part of a larger diverse group in cities.

Understanding these dynamics allows the research to shed light on the broader implications of urban migration for the Lois and also to provide some light on change in indigenous community geographic distribution within a broad framework of urbanisation in developing regions. Despite the greater influence of urbanisation on society, the Lois have retained and embraced their vast cultural heritage into modern urban settings. Traditions such as weaving and pottery, synonymous with their culture, have been retained.

The adaptation of these cultural elements into an urban framework is fairly complex. From being a domestic handicraft that traditionally was performed by women as part of domestic duties, it has now evolved into small entrepreneurship for disseminating ethnic crafts among an eclectic urban clientele. This vocation has brought much income and identity pride in their cultural background to the Lois women.

Religions, too, have changed to fit the lifestyle in the city. The old Lois traditional rituals and ceremonies will be performed in community halls and parks within cities, which may have much space for such big gatherings that can celebrate without such limitations by rural spaces. The religious functions also act as social occasions to keep in touch and strengthen community ties with the diaspora Lois from the cities.

Therefore, the traditional cultures serve as bridges between their historical rural past and their modern urban present, thus enabling the Lois to maintain continuity with the past even as they are integrating into the fabric of the city. This study explores how these cultural elements help foster community cohesion, create a notion of continuity and identity, and facilitate integration through the Lois's ability to relate to their larger urban culture.

4. URBANISATION AND ITS IMPACTS

The Lois community has changed considerably from rural to urban settings through the introduction of a spectrum of new socio-economic opportunities and challenges. From a more fundamental perspective, urbanisation has actually transformed traditional Lois lifestyles, changes in occupational roles, shifts in social practices, and the introduction of new cultural dynamics.

Urbanisation has brought about a lot of change in occupational roles. The traditional agricultural and craft-based livelihoods have come to be replaced with diversity in employment through the markets of urban cities, from retail businesses to service-oriented industries. This change affects the status of the economic status rather than changes the social status within the community; it affects predominantly, of course, gender roles and youth employment.

Social habits of the Lois have changed with the evolution of living conditions in towns. With urbanisation, an increase in nuclear families emanate from urbanised set-ups that basically replace the extended family type setups, thereby changing cultural understanding and the cultural practices that were passed down. Urban social networks comprise other kinds of populations of urbanites, not only those tied through kinship and community that influence cultural performance but also open new sources of learning.

But the urban space also poses a challenge to cultural transmission. The tensions of life in an urban environment, such as the emphasis on individualism and economic survival, can wear away communal bonds and break down the transmission of traditional knowledge and practice. And so, in the Lois community, they have had to find new ways and means to sustain the cultural identity: community events, cultural workshops, cultural associations that could help sustain and promote their traditions in the general context of an urban setting.

This section not only talks about how urbanisation has actually brought about a change in traditional Lois lifestyles but also discusses the process of cultural negotiation and adjustment that results from these changes. It talks about how the city environment either allows or disallows the handing down of cultural traditions and beliefs, and how the Lois are dealing with such a situation to maintain their cultural identity in this increasingly global world.

5. DISCUSSION

Investigating Lois's community's migratory pattern and their adaptation to the culture in urban society is highly important for understanding broader implications of urbanisation on indigenous societies. There are findings that will show both positive and negative impacts from the perspective of disruption and facilitation in processes of creation and changes of social landscapes by increasing negotiations that indigenous communities maintain the cultural identities.

One of the major impacts that this research has is in setting the need for enlightened and sensitive cultural policies, which have to factually take into account the challenges of indigenous groups, like Lois, as well as supporting traditional practices, since the urban environment does little to support them and subsequently erodes the overall culture over time. Therefore, policymakers need to form strategies which encourage cultural preservation within the frameworks of city planning. This might include cultural centres, inclusion of local practices in curricula education, and perhaps promotion of local arts and crafts in the urban economy.

More so, the study emphasises participatory approaches in urban planning because the indigenous communities actively participate in decision-making processes that define their lives and cultural expressions. Therefore, the voices of the indigenous populations can be incorporated into urban developments in cities to make them more inclusive and culturally diverse.

The migration of the Lois to cities further raises issues related to the rights of the indigenous groups. These groups face vulnerabilities, and their access to resources in the cities is limited or denied and aggravates socioeconomic exclusion. Ultimately, this research's conclusions should require the strengthening of legal and social structures in opposition to the rights of the indigenous regarding equal opportunities for housing, health care, education, and work.

This experience of the urban environment by the community of Lois underscores the importance of mechanisms that prevent cultural appropriation and respect indigenous knowledge and practice. Intellectual property rights, fair trade certifications, and cultural heritage protections are tools that can, among other things, protect the cultural expressions of the indigenous people in the city.

The cultural negotiations of the Lois undergo in urban spaces illustrate a larger phenomenon, whereby indigenous cultures adapt and change under pressures of modernisation. This research demonstrates how cultural identity is not a stable fixity but one of fluid relationship renewal through interaction with new social, economic, and political situations. Understanding these dynamics is important to design support systems that catalyse, rather than impede, the process of cultural adaptation and resilience.

6. CONCLUSION

The trend of the Lois community moving into urban areas represents something happening around the world, wherein indigenous and traditional communities are moving into cities in search of better living and opportunities. Urbanisation presents significant challenges in preservation but gives unprecedented opportunities for cultural expression and adaptation.

Urbanisation may affect the weakening of indigenous culture or even lead to a threat to the sustainability of the conduct of the culture. On the other hand, the city environment allows for renewal through increased exposure and new forms of expression. For instance, markets within cities can be an avenue for commercialising the traditional crafts. Digital media provides a wider reach with the same heritage and thus preserving and enhancing cultural heritage.

There should be a prompt necessity for longitudinal studies that probe the long-term impact of the processes of urbanisation of indigenous peoples. This will lead to exploring the cultural mechanisms of resilience and has potential in informing more effective culture preservation strategies. The arena of study also needs to expand to cover what technology does in enhancing the preservative capabilities of culture and what milieus of urbanisation might come to mean in terms of spaces of cultural innovation and fusion.

Therefore, creating cultural resilience in urban contexts requires a concerted effort from all the stakeholders, governments, cultural organisations, planners as well as the communities themselves towards creating spaces where traditional influences and modern ones meet and get enriched by the synergy between one another, thereby ensuring that the cultural heritages of indigenous communities like Lois are not just conserved but also fostered in new adaptive forms.

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