

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI

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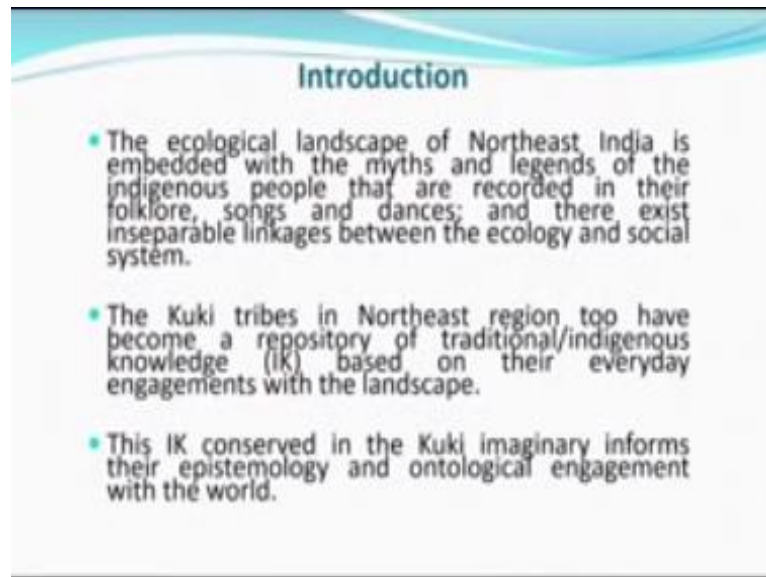
Ecology and Society

**Dr. Ngamjahao Kipgen
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati**

Well while the in the last two lectures we have discussed the idea of what in knowledge is what is ready traditional ecological knowledge. Now you know in this lecture I would like to present on the ecological knowledge we service subsistence and livelihood practices which is experienced by the UT community and notice India. Now these are partly something which is which is it was based on my doctoral thesis, so I would like to share some bit of it so that you have an glimpse an idea of how the communities are pretty much connected in terms trying to make sense of their environment or if not the kind of such subsystems within a way is really you know instrumental in their sharing the kind of connections with their environment.

Now if you look at the ecological landscape mostly in northeast India there are a lot of myths and legends or maybe folk stories the belief system so and so forth which are pretty much embedded in the you know landscape and if you look at the kind of belief systems needs lesions of the indigenous people that are recorded in their folklore songs and dances, there they have this seems to be existing existence of an inseparable linkages between the ecology and the social systems.

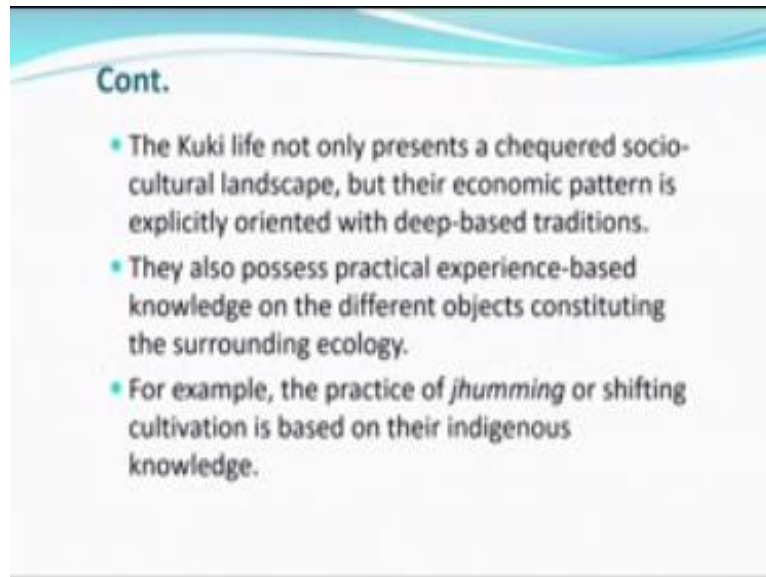
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Now similarly like other tribes and communities the Kuki tribes in notice reason to have the sort of a repository of traditional or indigenous knowledge based on their everyday engagement with the landscape, now what are the kind of engagement they have, one thing is they also belongs to the mean they do also practice this phrasing that is hunting and gathering and then primarily engaged in this jhumming or shifting cultivation.

Now this is this knowledge which is being you know accrue or practices for generations in a way is being conserved in the Kuki imaginary informs their epistemology and ontological engagement with the world, now how then this indigenous knowledge is being preserved.

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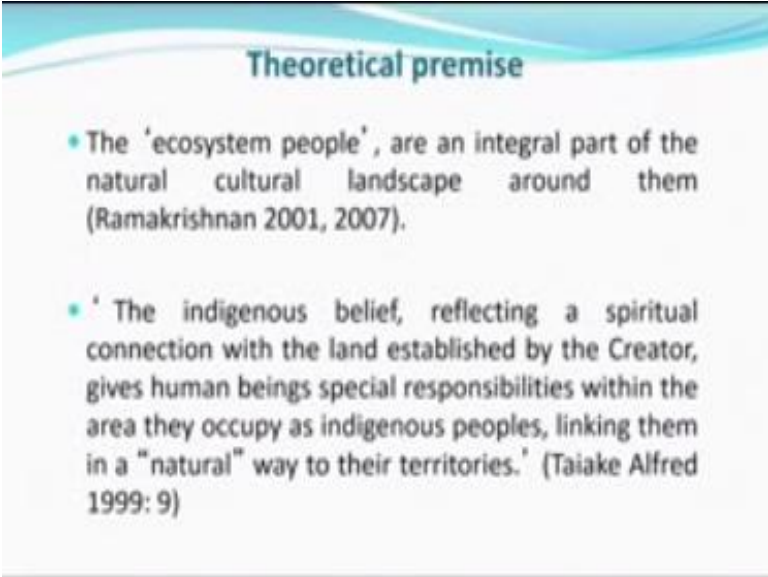


Or you know being practices when in terms of how they are being located in their ecological landscape, now if you look at the Kuki way of life they not only present a checkered socio-cultural landscape but their economic pattern is explicitly oriented with deep base traditions which means though they also post-process practical experience based knowledge on the different objects constituting the surrounding ecology.

Now for example the practice of the jhumming or shifting cultivation is based on their indigenous knowledge, now they possess this practical base knowledge as we were talking about the Levi-Strauss argument of the brie position or the brie colleagues that is making use of things tools at hand that is also something which the Kuki is have in a way you know been experiencing. Now I'm partly the trying to historically contextualize the practices mostly bits continues today but mostly the belief systems were predominantly their pre christened and councils that is beginning from the late19th century and early 20th century most of the tribal communities in this reason you know converted to Christianity and as a result with many of the belief systems or in a way the idea of this culture landscape has to some extent has been diluted or declined.

But I am just trying to talk all this you know from the instances where which were more or less primarily I mean the primal religion period.

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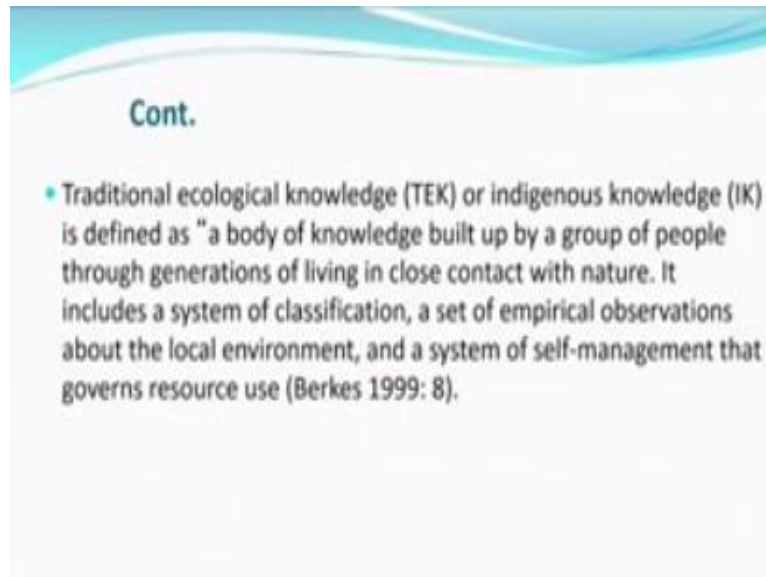
Theoretical premise

- The 'ecosystem people', are an integral part of the natural cultural landscape around them (Ramakrishnan 2001, 2007).
- ' The indigenous belief, reflecting a spiritual connection with the land established by the Creator, gives human beings special responsibilities within the area they occupy as indigenous peoples, linking them in a "natural" way to their territories.' (Taiake Alfred 1999: 9)

The presentations for this on this particular team is premised within the theory of this the for example the ecosystem people which are an integral part of the natural or cultural landscape around them this is pretty much seen from the works of Rama Krishnan as I said extensive study on shifting cultivation among the I mean people in notice.

Now the indigenous belief also reflecting a spiritual connection with the land established by the Creator gives human beings a spiritual responsibility within the area they occupy as in less people including them in a natural way to their territories.

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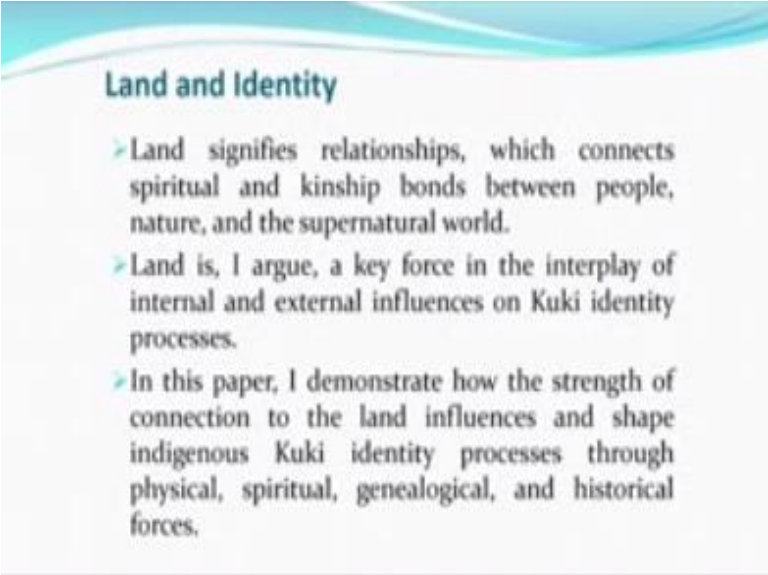


Now the traditional ecological knowledge or indigenous knowledge is defined as a body of knowledge builds up by a group of people through generations of living in close contact with nature and it also includes a system of classification that is a set of empirical observations about the local environment and a system of self management that governs resource used. Now TEK is culturally and spiritually based way in which indigenous' people will leads to their ecosystem, this knowledge again is founded on the spiritual cultural instructions from time immemorial and on generations of careful observations within an ecosystem of continuous residence.

Now for indigenous peoples as we had discussed about involves joining perspective in both rights it is India relationship with the land their business of dwelling their history and falls both the land and living beings who inhabit in it are caught up in the same ongoing historical process, now indigenous people have their own effective science and resource use practices. Now why is that there is a close relationship between Lenin identity even among the Kuki communities land signifies relationship which connects spiritual and also kinship bonds between people nature and the sports supernatural world ladies I argue in this paper that a key force in the interplay of internal and external influences in the Kuki identity process.

In this paper also I demonstrate how the strength of connection to the land influenced and said in the Kuki identity process through physical spiritual genealogical and historical forces.

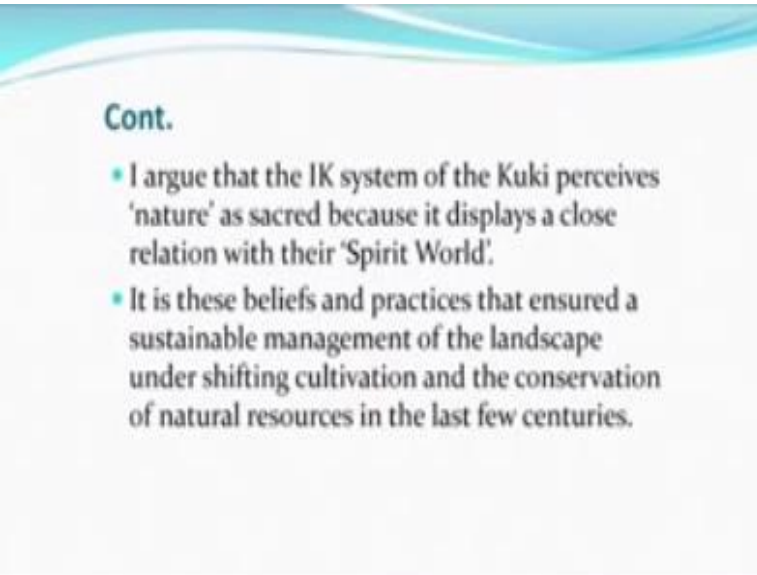
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Land and Identity

- Land signifies relationships, which connects spiritual and kinship bonds between people, nature, and the supernatural world.
- Land is, I argue, a key force in the interplay of internal and external influences on Kuki identity processes.
- In this paper, I demonstrate how the strength of connection to the land influences and shape indigenous Kuki identity processes through physical, spiritual, genealogical, and historical forces.

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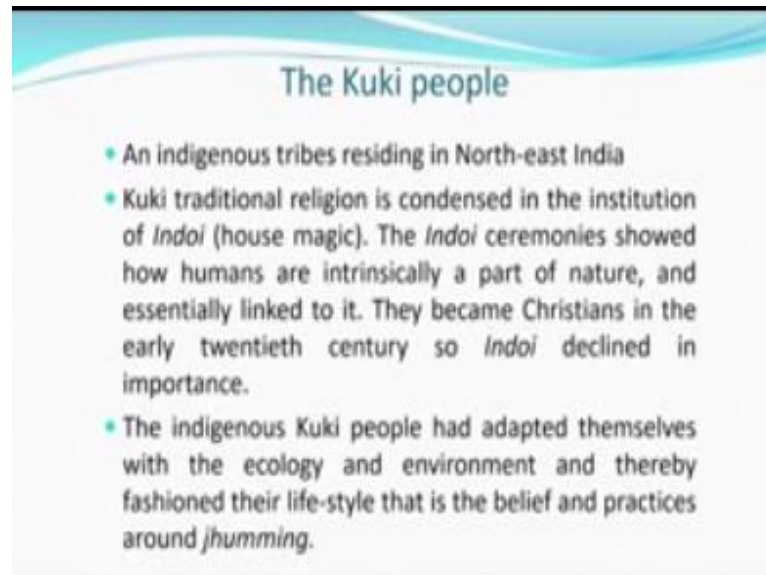


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- I argue that the IK system of the Kuki perceives 'nature' as sacred because it displays a close relation with their 'Spirit World'.
- It is these beliefs and practices that ensured a sustainable management of the landscape under shifting cultivation and the conservation of natural resources in the last few centuries.

Now I argue that this individual knowledge systems of the cookie perceive nature aesthetic because of it displays the close relationship with their spirit world or maybe we can say the cosmology, it is this beliefs and practices that ensure a sustainable management of the landscape understand in the landscape under shifting cultivation practices and conservation of natural resource in the last few centuries.

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Now before going into brief details we can perhaps try to see who the Kuki people are. They are in the indigenous tribes residing in North India and across the state of Arunachal Pradesh they are being scattered and mostly confined to the state of Manipur. Now the Kuki traditional religion is condemned in the institutions of *Indoi*, the house magic which is usually hung among the in the Kuki household prior to their conversion to Christianity. The *Indoi* ceremonies taught how humans are intrinsically a part of nature and essentially linked to it. They became Christian knowledge in the century.

So the practices of this house magic declined in importance, now the indigenous Kuki people had adapted themselves with the ecology and environment and thereby fashioned their lifestyle that is the belief and practices around *jhumming*.

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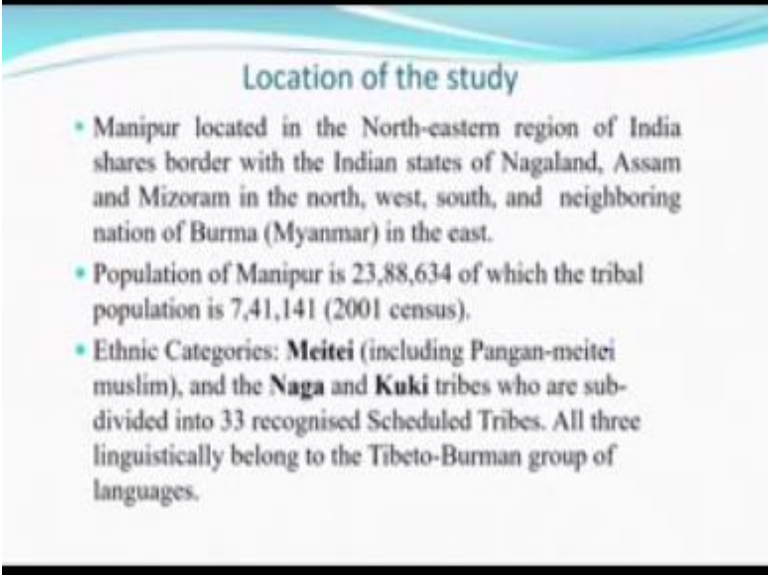


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- Every Kuki clan follows a patrilineal lineage system (genealogy is trace through the eldest male member)
- Social institution among the Kuki clans is based on kinship relation
- Political organisation: Each clan have their own separate village – having one clan chief and many village chiefs

Now the Kuki are in a way divided into different clan and sub-points and every Kuki clans follows paternal lineage system that is a genealogy which is normally trails through the elders male members, and the social institutions among the Kuki clans is based on kinship relation and the political organization it can have their own separate village having one clan chief and many chief.

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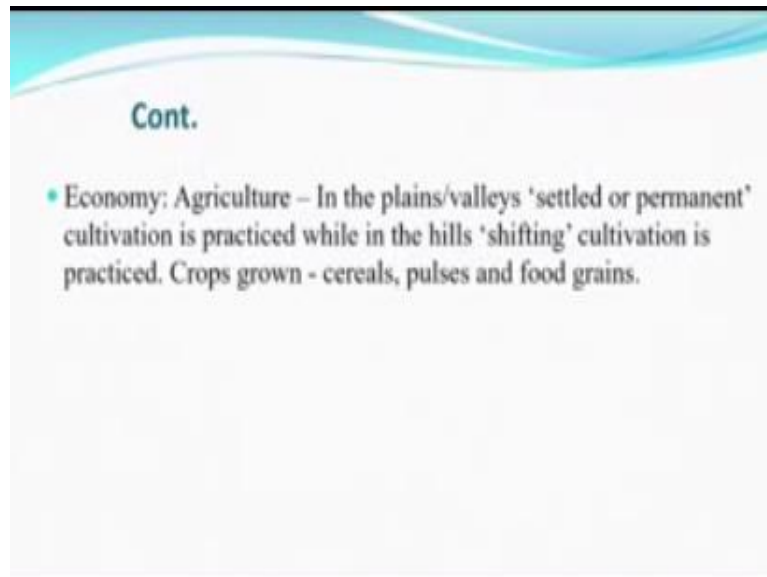


Location of the study

- Manipur located in the North-eastern region of India shares border with the Indian states of Nagaland, Assam and Mizoram in the north, west, south, and neighboring nation of Burma (Myanmar) in the east.
- Population of Manipur is 23,88,634 of which the tribal population is 7,41,141 (2001 census).
- Ethnic Categories: **Meitei** (including Pangan-meitei muslim), and the **Naga** and **Kuki** tribes who are subdivided into 33 recognised Scheduled Tribes. All three linguistically belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of languages.

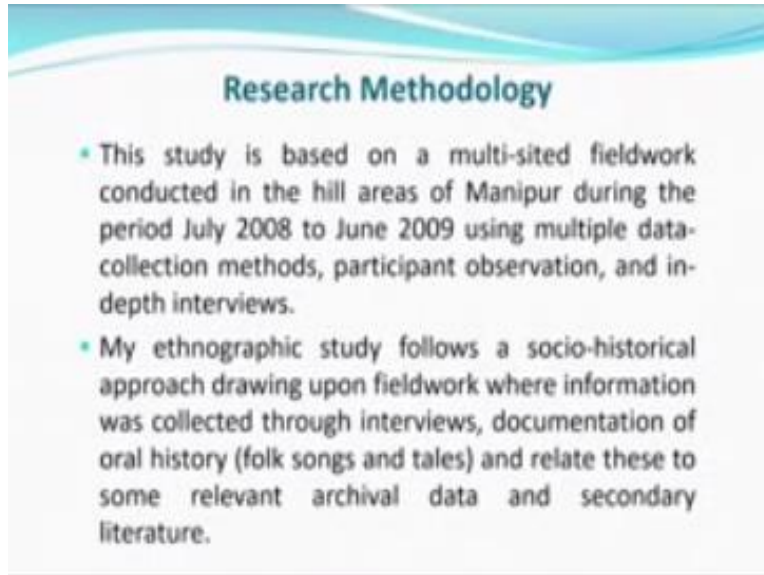
Now the location of the study over here this presentation is primarily confined to Manipur which in away is located North- eastern region of Indian which is more during some state of India and then the saying international among remit Myanmar, and the populations as of 2001 census is 23 lakhs, however the 2011 census which I did not give here is 27 lakhs and all fits the tribal's normally constitute 40% of the populations and any cut categories if you look at is mostly the Meitei's knowledge and Kuki tribes who are subdivided into three recognizable tribes.

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Now if you look at the economy agriculture in away his practices in both the plains and the valleys but the valleys practice mostly the permanent cultivation while the hills practice shifting cultivation.

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A presentation slide titled "Research Methodology" with a blue and white wavy header. It contains two bullet points describing the study's methodology.

Research Methodology

- This study is based on a multi-sited fieldwork conducted in the hill areas of Manipur during the period July 2008 to June 2009 using multiple data-collection methods, participant observation, and in-depth interviews.
- My ethnographic study follows a socio-historical approach drawing upon fieldwork where information was collected through interviews, documentation of oral history (folk songs and tales) and relate these to some relevant archival data and secondary literature.

And crops grown hares are mostly in Austria so and so forth now as I said this study is based on the multi-sided field work which is conducted by hilly areas of Manipur living the period down it with June 2009 using multiple data collection methods that is also participant observation and in-depth interviews for my doctoral thesis my a number of key study in a way follows a socio-historical efforts growing upon fieldwork where information was collected through interviews documentation of oral history folk songs and TL and relate this to some eleven archival data and secondary literature.

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And this is the sort of a location of the study which you can have an idea where the study located.

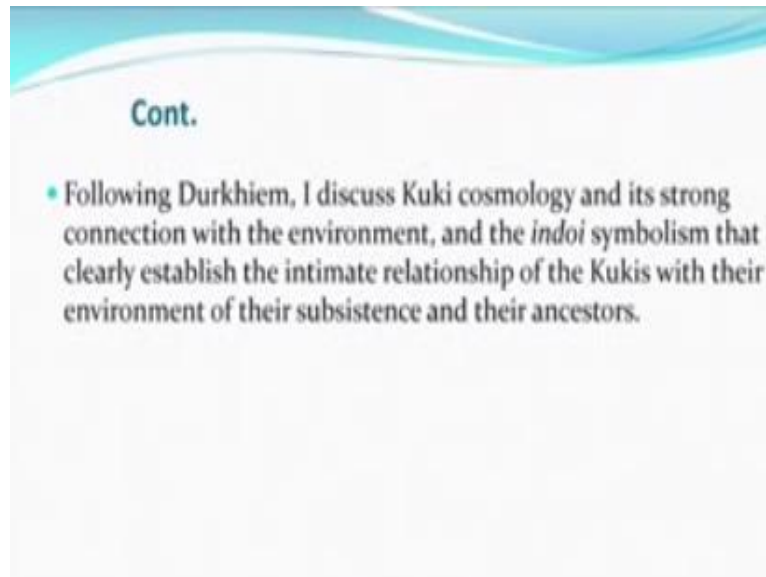
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Now to begin with what done is Kuki cosmology, now if you look at the works of my little time that is in his elementary forms of religious life real time argued powerfully the religion and rituals in away provided both context and medium for the affirmation of society's fundamental principles of organization, that is how religions and rituals is to be you know affirm or related with the principles of a social organization and in that because do come in a way give a lot of importance to society and society perhaps is the foundation of a religion.

And Durkhiem view society as a system of forces which is conditioned by the symbolizing process and symbols with our instruments of preserving and expressing these social sentiments, now therefore the individuals in a society or the society in a way is given so much importance by due time that it is a forces which conditioned the individuals in some sense. Now following rule can I you know discuss this Kuki cosmology and its strong connections with the environment.

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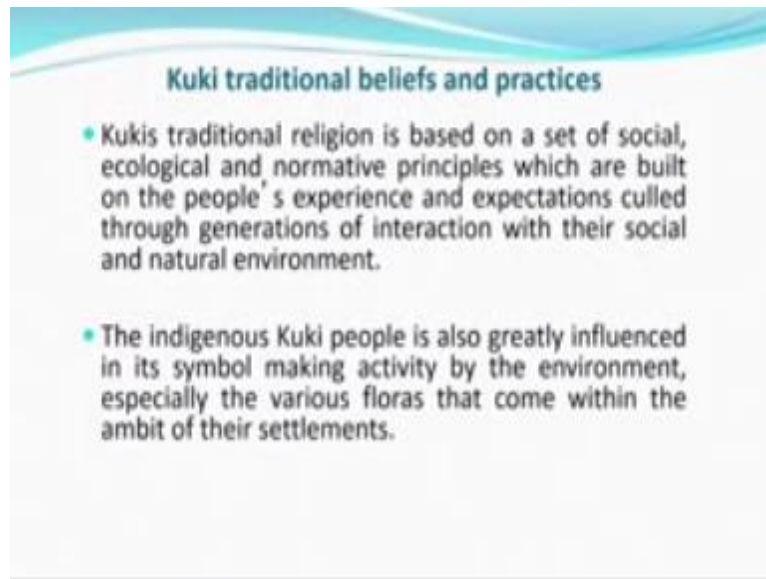


And the *indoi* symbolism that is the house many expertise found in the every Kuki household symbolizes that clearly the symbolism there clearly establish the intimate relationship of the Kuki with an environment of their sub systems and their ancestors. Now in a way the economic perspective of substation is one thing and the other is the kind of close relationship they share with the ancestor that is the idea of maintaining their cultural identity, now Scylla Torre in a way maintains that this local knowledge is conditioned by the socio cultural tradition that is being culturally relative understanding which is inculcated into the individuals from birth structuring how the interferes with the environment.

Now therefore the social cultural traditions is important of how this local knowledge is being mauled and saved and how it is being produced now in a sense this Kuki primal religion that is a pre-Christian period can be perceived as a form of local knowledge and a way of relating to their land. Now the Kuki is through there any culture practices or maybe through the regions and ceremonies express a close connection with their landscape which are based on their rights in relation to and responsibilities to their land and their spiritual connections with it.

Now the kinky traditional beliefs and practices if you look at the traditional religions which are more or less based on a set of social ecological and pneumatic principles are built on the people's experience and expectations which are called through generations of interactions with their social and natural environment.

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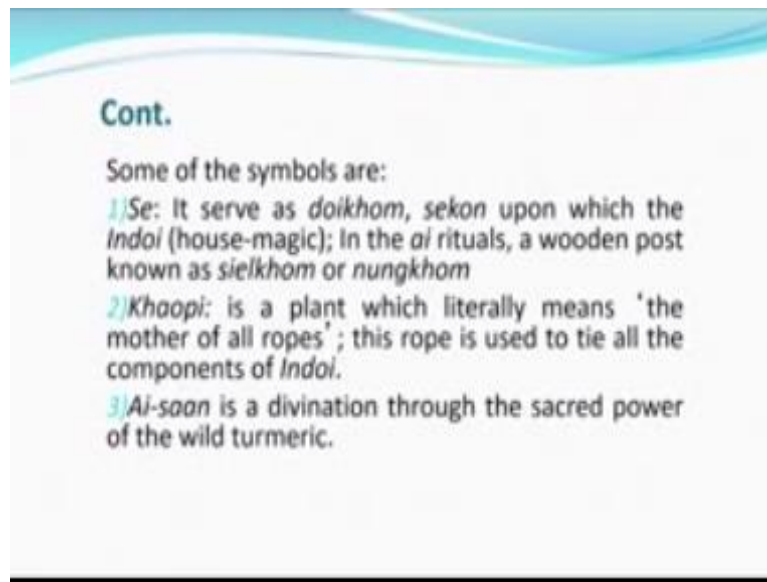


Now the indigenous Kuki people is also greatly ensuring its symbol making activity by the environment especially that is the various floors that come within the ambit of their settlement that is there they have that you know making use of the floors which are in their surroundings, now this constant interactions between the social and natural environment for generations in away has sort of developed certain kind of beliefs and practices to the Kuki community in terms of the symbol making or creation of the symbolism.

Now some of the symbols which are you know reflected in the domain of this flora are that is a say that is it servers are going home series a an oak tree and we serve as the post of how the house magic's are being hanged and then in therefore in the rituals performance like I that is a wooden post not as silk or monochrome is being hanged. Now therefore this oak tree in a way is but this only a mere object but it has certain kind of a cultural significance or it has a symbolic

power because it is being used in the visual practices and the next is a county that is a plant which literally means the mother of all ropes, this rope is used to tie all the components of the indoi.

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And the in the indoi that is the house magic you have this the skulls of a pig a god and then the horn of a got and you have the fed white cell feather of chicken and then you have all those metals and objects which are being hung in the house magic. And the third is the Ai-saan that is a divination through the sacred power of the wild turmeric that is which has not yellow in color but which is black in color that while turmeric which is believed to have a lot of healing power two different kind of ailments.

So these are some of the you knowing Flores which is symbolic to the Kuki community, now over here this is something which are capture.

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The kind of documentation which are being made where the indoi that is the house magic being hang and on the right-hand side is it is a dome field where ginger plantations are being made so this is you know the Christmit perform and propitiate the house magic for the prosperity and welfare of the households, so normally these are being done almost once a year or maybe one house is newly established. So as to ask or venerate the spirit to bless the new household in the pursuit of maybe any culture in so on and so forth.

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So this sort of practices in a way has you know resulted in bringing mother's good health but prosperity to a Kuki family. Now we will try to observe discuss some of the kind of connections the Kukis help with their plan and forest, now the principles of Land man connectedness is central to the Kuki cosmology as it is believed that the human life is interconnected with the environment they are into it length the Kuki is inextricably linked to the material and spiritual worlds.

Material because it is it is not the ability territory or maybe not just meant for farming practices but also they have a spiritual connections to it, for the Kuki that is Forest has a culturally significant and also among multi-dimensionally appropriated space and it has a meaningful role in aspect of the religious social and economic life.

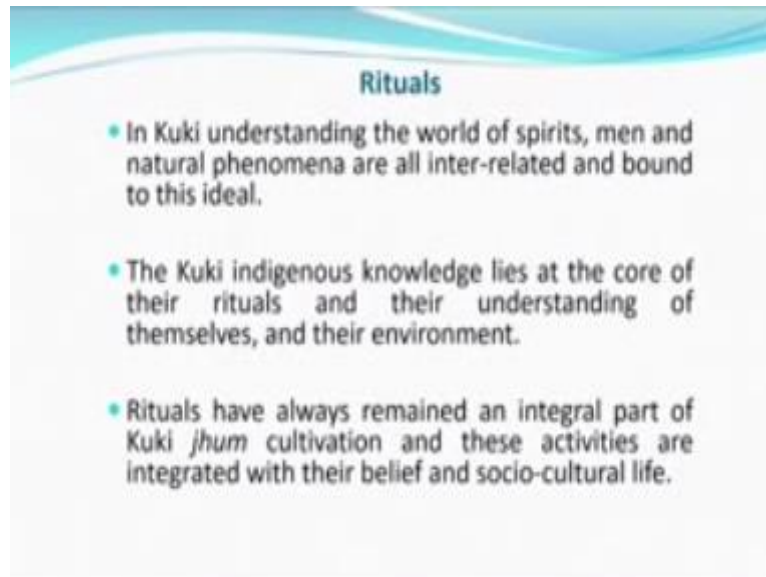
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- The forest is a space linked with spirits (both helpful and dangerous), and ancestors, and therefore, has a strong symbolic significance.
- Subsistence of the Kuki community is dependent on *jhumming* cultivation. Their life is guided by the agriculture cycle of *jhumming*; for instance, festival and ceremonies revolving around it.
- The practice of *jhumming* is deeply integrated into their social, cultural, and economic life styles.

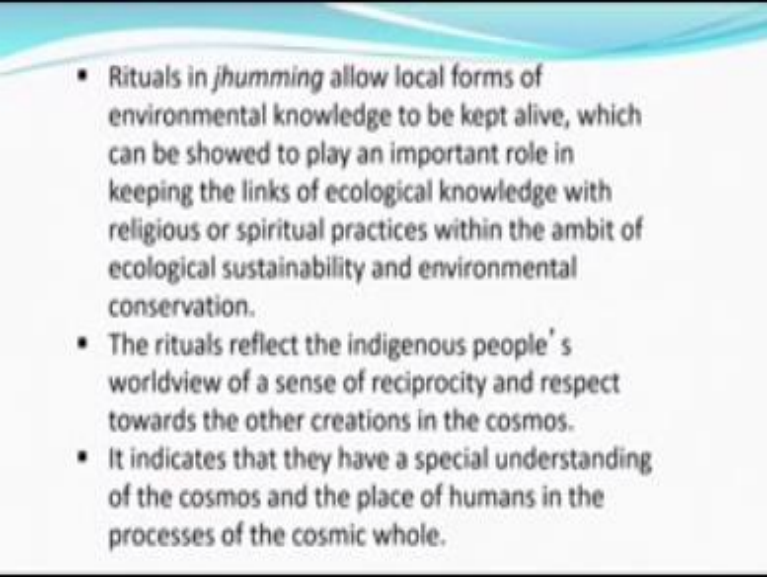
The forest is also space it is linked with spirits that is it can be evil and it can be good that is helpful and dangerous and also ancestors and therefore has a strong symbolic significance subsistence of the Kuki community is again dependent on human cultivation, their life in a way is guided by the agriculture cycles of *jhumming* for instance the festivals and ceremonies evolves and around. Now the practice of this *jhumming* is deeply integrated into the social cultural and economic life stands.

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Now we will try to discuss some of the rituals which revolves around these jhumming practices including understanding of the world of spirits many natural phenomena are all interrelated and bound decided, now the Kuki and in this life lies at the core of the rituals and their understanding of themselves and their environment, we chose in a way half you know remained an integral part of Kuki *jhum* cultivation and these activities are integrated with their belief and socio-cultural life.

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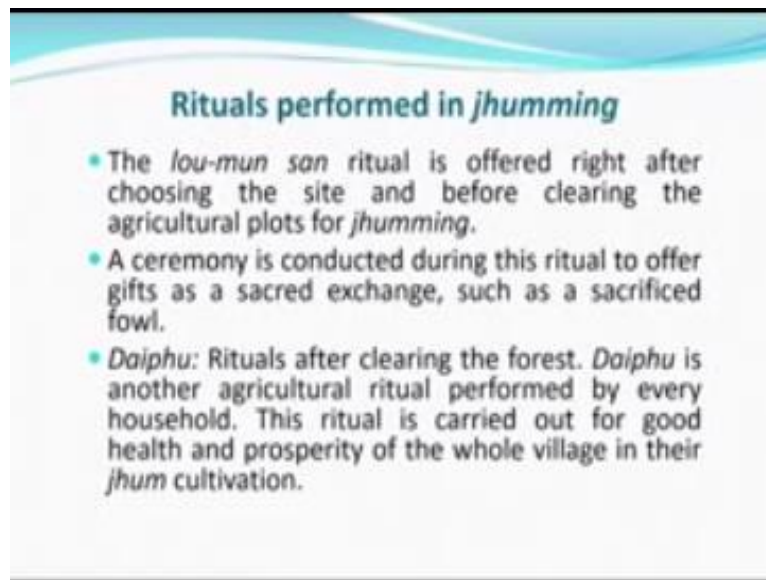
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- Rituals in *jhumming* allow local forms of environmental knowledge to be kept alive, which can be showed to play an important role in keeping the links of ecological knowledge with religious or spiritual practices within the ambit of ecological sustainability and environmental conservation.
 - The rituals reflect the indigenous people's worldview of a sense of reciprocity and respect towards the other creations in the cosmos.
 - It indicates that they have a special understanding of the cosmos and the place of humans in the processes of the cosmic whole.

Now what is what is the one of the rules of visuals in jhumming purposes these practices in a way allow local forms of environmental knowledge to be kept alive which can be thought to play you know an important role in keeping the wings of the ecological knowledge with the religious or maybe spiritual practices within the ambit of ecological sustainability and Environmental Conservation.

Now the ritual in a way reflect the indigenous peoples worldview of a sense of reciprocity and respect towards the other creation in the cosmos, now because this bison by centric view of nature is something which is pretty much turbulence among the fulfills cosmology too because they have this idea of sense of reciprocity and respect to what other creations, so that sort of biocentrism is pretty much prevalent among the Kuki tools it also indicates that they have a special understanding of the cosmos and the place of humans in the process of the cosmic hold because it is important to you know identify and situate how a cookie in the ears tries to you know position themselves in in this process of the whole cosmic.

Because one thing which is pretty much given is the kind of respect and sense of reciprocity that is caring and nurturing on the part or maybe the idea of regeneration of ecosystem is pretty much privileged in the idea of the psyche of a Kuki individual.

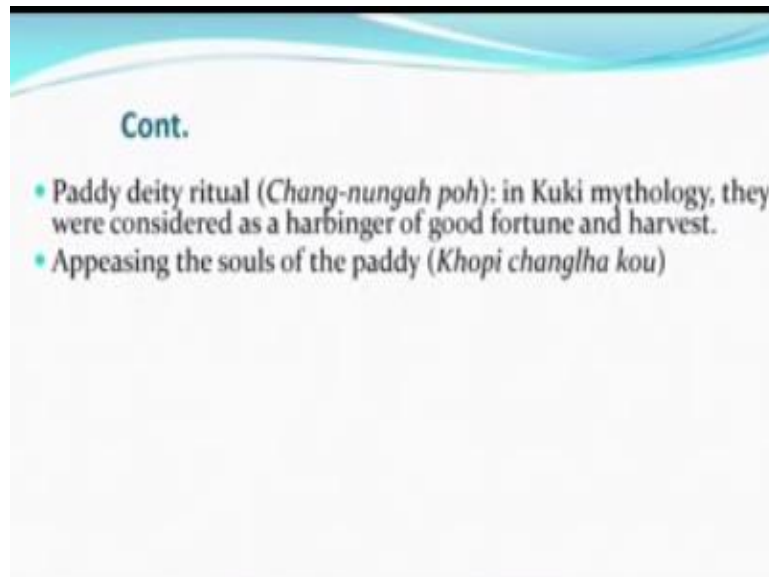
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Now some of the rituals which are practiced lightly like for example the *lou-mun san* which means you know taking an omen before choosing the site for an agriculture you know *jhumming* site is over right after choosing the site and before claimed agriculture plots for *jhumming*. Now a ceremony again is conducted during the this ritual to offer gift as a second exchange such as the sacrifice fold.

Now in this a white pole is being sacrificed, so as to appease the spirit of that area or site. Now the second ritual is *Daiphu* that is rituals of the clearing the forest the *Daiphu* is another agriculture ritual performed in every household that is this ritual is carried out for good health and prosperity of the whole village in the *jhumming* cultivation.

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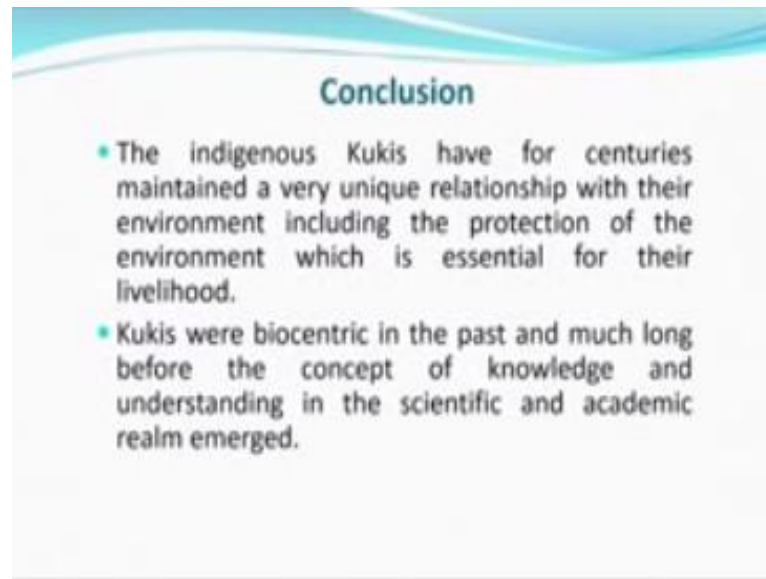
Now there is also a prevalence of a Paddy deity that is my rituals of Chang – nungah poh in Kuki mythology they were considered as a harbinger of good fortune and harvest that is fishing the souls of the paddy that is Khopi changlha kou. So therefore these sort of rituals are being privileged.

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Now on the left hand side you can see the picture of Priest which is propitiating the low moves and that is the ritual before and after choosing the site for this jhumming it is you know appeasing the spirits and are seeking a prayer for abundance harvesting and health for the family and on the right hand side is social celebrations which are usually performed after the harvesting festivals.

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So these are some of the kind of rituals there are a lot of rituals but I just want to limit and confined to a few and the idea is to you know look at the resource and ceremonies at the same time the kind of socio-cultural practices which are pretty much embedded in the kuki way of life that is the worldview and cosmology in the one hand and on the other and the socio-cultural practices and also alongside in keeping up the knowledge system at the same time maintaining the cultural identity is something which is some clubbed together in terms of the idea of the ecological landscape in which the subsistence practices alongside their knowledge system is being you know maintained and which follows an integral part and processes.

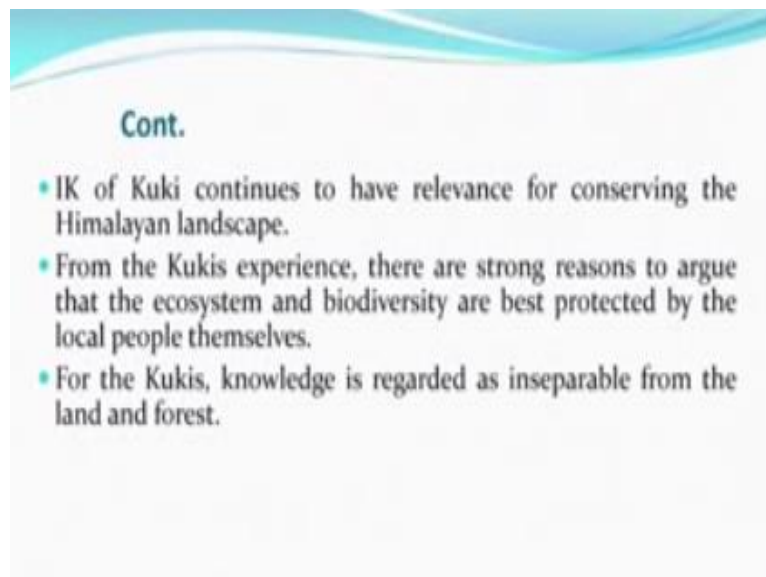
Now in conclusion we can in away say that the indigenous kukis have for centuries maintained a very unique relationship with their and one and that is the protection of their environment which is essential for their livelihood and we can in a way also say that the kuki were biocentric in the past and much long before the concept of knowledge and this understanding in the scientific and academic really emerges.

Now as we have discussed the indigenous knowledge of cookies continues to have relevance for conserving the Emmaline the eastern Himalaya and landscape and from the kukis experience

there are also strong reasons to argue that the ecosystem and biodiversity are best protected by the local people themselves. Now therefore there is an increasing relation that if the forests are to be protected the community participation is something which are being you know strongly encouraged upon.

So therefore the participation of the community or the locals are something which are strongly being located and perhaps if the need be there for the practical participations of the locals not necessarily by reviving their whole village and practices but at least in principles these ideas or you know belief or their kind of connections with the environment and in some way be you know and with an inculcated.

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And then if that is the case perhaps the knowledge system can in a way be you know recognized and given a place and therefore there is a greater possibility that the ecosystem and biodiversity in away can be best protected by the accommodations and inclusions of those communities like the treaties and for that matter any other indigenous peoples especially in the Northeast region. Now for the point is to knowledge is regarded as inseparable from the land and forests so apart

from the dependence economically to the land and forests they also have that kind of affinity not just in terms of expressing their cultural identity.

But as they have shared knowledge and then understanding their connections the deep-rooted connections between them and land and Forest is something which can be sort of understood, now with that I am the sort of discussions on the kuki way of life the ecological knowledge the subsistent practices and life level practice and to what extent, how the you know rituals cosmology belief systems were inherent and then to bring in the idea of what Lin White has argued powerfully by saying that the judeo-christian belief in a way has sort of you know to blame for the ecological crisis.

So in a way if you bring that in the context of the kuki people it is also interesting to see that the kind of relationship which they share it means that the rituals like the enjoy elements on the dipole so and so for this I have this only a cyclic and of cynic significant fear which I have shown are today normally not being practices and then some of which is considered as evil these are something which are being you know are branded by the early Christian missionaries from guided by the wisdom scientific ideas.

Because every practices of the you know indigenous people are seem to be uncivilized irrational and evil, so therefore this idea of or the dualism which they share with nature or the bio centric view which they share with nature which is pretty much you know can be instrumental in terms of protecting the forests today have surface in a negative way because since most of the kuki people have to be converted the Christian religion they have maintained you know a sort of the anthropocentric ideas towards nature and that sense of individualism or nature is seen to be you know as from a commercial or utilitarian perspective.

And that idea of communicating homing communitarian ideas and feelings which were pretty much prevalent in the past are no longer present but as Pope John Paul has talked about in terms of the changing dispensations of all the crucifixion the fructification of Jesus Christ has in a way tries to bridge the gap between the two of how the humans are having sharing an antagonistic or enmity with nature or as a result of the beginning from the Garden of Eden has in a way has to be

resurrected and that misunderstanding between God and human in a way is being healed and if an individual in a way tries to you know redirect oneself that sort of relationship between nature has to be looked at.

And I am sure I am not confusing you but I am just trying to bring in the context of their in the kuki people and how Christianity for the past century began form early 19th century no no later part of 19th century and early 20th century in a way is being defragment and then the kind of relationship is a share with nature has changed totally and there is an increasing realization that that sort of knowledge which they have a century ago has relevance today and how is that going to be you know positioned and how do they try to contextualize.

So perhaps maybe the self-realization or any ecological did ecological awareness what Lin White has talked about needs to be you know brought in here so that an idea of how to the use of indigenous knowledge the natural resource is managed in a more sustainable manner, thank you.

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