

## **LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY: A STUDY OF THE ETHNIC ASSERTION OF TIKHIR TRIBE IN NAGALAND**

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India's northeast region is inhabited by numerous Indigenous communities with diverse multicultural and multilingual backgrounds. Language and identity have emerged as focal points of ethnic conflict and self-assertion movements among many linguistic minority communities in this region. In Nagaland State, growing alienation and hostility with the neighbouring Yimkhiung dominant tribe have spurred the Tikhir community to demand a separate tribe identity. The Tikhir community contested the imposition of a dominant language group within their community and has endured significant human and economic losses due to ethnic conflict. This paper delineates the process of ethnic assertion within the Tikhir community and their quest for identity. It elucidates the evolution of the Tikhir's struggle for identity through dialect separation and the influence of religious affiliation. The paper also delves into the role of various Tikhir ethnic associations in identity assertion and the pivotal issues fueling their movement.

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