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00:00:00,180 --> 00:00:04,890

[Auto-generated transcript. Edits may have been applied for clarity.]

Hello and welcome to the Migration Oxford Podcast. I'm Jackie Brodhead and I'm Rob McNeil.

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00:00:05,340 --> 00:00:06,780

Rob, what are we talking about today?

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00:00:07,560 --> 00:00:17,010

So what we're talking about today is Christian missionary work, mapping Christian missionary work in a very specific part of, uh, of India.

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00:00:17,010 --> 00:00:23,100

So in the northeast of India, and even more specifically, really, we're focusing primarily on,

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00:00:23,100 --> 00:00:28,230

uh, on the state of Mizoram and also on the state of Nagaland as well.

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00:00:28,620 --> 00:00:36,090

And we're speaking to three extraordinary experts, um, about their, um, their various and very different work,

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00:00:36,270 --> 00:00:45,330

looking at the role of Christian missionary work and the kind of emergence of Christianity within the cultures of those areas.

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00:00:46,200 --> 00:00:57,479

Yeah. The absolute joy of this podcast is, I think, firstly, the privilege of kind of seeing the breadth of migration research here at Oxford,

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but also the kind of opportunity to learn about topics that you have absolutely no kind of prior knowledge of,

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which I think is the case for both of us. Um, in this, uh, in this particular example, but so incredibly interesting.

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And for me, I think one of the things that's so interesting is how this idea of kind of missionary

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00:01:16,290 --> 00:01:22,580

work as emigration and obviously through kind of a complete colonial lens,

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00:01:22,590 --> 00:01:26,459

but then the way that that's been reshaped, reinterpreted, kind of reclaimed,

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00:01:26,460 --> 00:01:29,310

re owned by the communities in these places,

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00:01:29,310 --> 00:01:34,920

that it kind of really belongs to them and shapes their idea of identity and belonging outside of kind of that,

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00:01:35,130 --> 00:01:41,700

that single kind of arrival in, I think, the 1870s of, of particular kind of missionaries.

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00:01:42,600 --> 00:01:49,979

Yeah. No, absolutely. And there's a there's a sort of weird thing for me in this personally, insofar as my background initially was in archaeology,

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00:01:49,980 --> 00:01:58,050

and one of the things that I was always really interested in, the I studied in my bachelor's degree in archaeology was the spread of Roman culture.

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00:01:58,590 --> 00:02:05,489

And one of the things that Romans did very well was to actually accommodate the gods of the areas where they would turn up.

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00:02:05,490 --> 00:02:09,000

Right? So they'd turn up in Britain and there'd be some water, gold or whatever.

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00:02:09,300 --> 00:02:12,840

And the Romans would, uh, the Romans would accommodate that God into their pantheon.

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00:02:12,840 --> 00:02:17,520

And commonly, actually, you would have gods that would make their way into the kind of Roman culture.

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00:02:18,180 --> 00:02:26,550

And it was very interesting to me to hear particularly about how Christianity in, in, in England in particular,

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00:02:26,820 --> 00:02:37,830

had become something which had adopted a lot of the concepts of the existing animist religions that had been there and had become this very specific,

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00:02:37,950 --> 00:02:44,580

very particular interpretation of Christianity that existed really in that place as a part of that culture,

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00:02:44,700 --> 00:02:49,499

and that accommodated all of the history in the past of of the place without just

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00:02:49,500 --> 00:02:53,790

kind of steamrolling it and having a kind of year zero where Christianity began.

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00:02:53,970 --> 00:03:02,220

All of the stuff that was, that was, that was existing there became part of the new imagination of what this community became.

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00:03:02,460 --> 00:03:08,160

And I thought that was a really fascinating way of looking at something which we tend to look at in very black and white terms.

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00:03:08,160 --> 00:03:13,410

You know, colonial religion is imposed on people and they're forced to operate in a particular way.

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00:03:13,530 --> 00:03:18,810

But then there's this situation where a community evolves with something new.

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00:03:19,230 --> 00:03:25,110

And I think that's a really interesting way of looking at things. I found the whole conversation really, really interesting.

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00:03:25,950 --> 00:03:26,879

Yeah, absolutely.

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00:03:26,880 --> 00:03:33,959

And it made me reflect a little bit on kind of the different types of migration that we have been sort of covering within this podcast.

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00:03:33,960 --> 00:03:41,610

So obviously we think about the mobility of people and have some discussion in this about the position of this particular, these particular areas.

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00:03:41,610 --> 00:03:45,780

You know, the fact that they're Borderlands and the fact that they feel quite distant from London.

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00:03:45,780 --> 00:03:52,950

DM and the effect that that has on, you know, on how you feel and kind of your identity, but also I think, you know,

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00:03:52,950 --> 00:03:59,609

we looked on our episode on remittances about kind of migration as the movement of money and now thinking about kind of migration as the movement

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00:03:59,610 --> 00:04:08,070

of ideas and this kind of wider sense of how we think about the kind of impacts of migration through all these different lenses and perspectives.

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00:04:08,910 --> 00:04:15,180

Absolutely. It's not just the movement, but the sort of the adoption of ideas, you know, the, the, the, you know,

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00:04:15,270 --> 00:04:22,129

the changes in people as a result of encountering new new concepts, new ideas, new things, you know,

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00:04:22,130 --> 00:04:26,040

and we take it for granted that Britain has changed as a result of different

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00:04:26,040 --> 00:04:30,179

religions and different foods and all the other things that that shift the shift,

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00:04:30,180 --> 00:04:31,620

the way that a nation functions.

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00:04:31,890 --> 00:04:40,290

And of course, it's natural to think, to realise that the cultures and ideas that we that have been exported through the colonial period,

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00:04:40,290 --> 00:04:46,680

through all kinds of other situations will take root, but they will also become part of those communities,

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00:04:46,890 --> 00:04:50,700

as opposed to simply being things that are that are remote.

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00:04:50,700 --> 00:04:52,890

And I think that it's helpful to see it in those ways.

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00:04:53,040 --> 00:04:59,580

It's also helpful to really engage with the realities of of geographies that we don't think about.

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00:04:59,670 --> 00:05:07,770

That much here. I mean, Mizoram, for those who are listening, who who know all of the details about the location of the state of Mizoram.

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00:05:07,980 --> 00:05:15,800

I didn't realise it was this place between between essentially Myanmar, Burma, whatever you, whatever we should call it, and Bangladesh,

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00:05:15,810 --> 00:05:21,600

which you know, so you've got, you've got a, you've got a Buddhist state on one side, you've got a muslim state on the other side.

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00:05:21,720 --> 00:05:27,270

And sandwiched between the two of them is is a Christian is a Christian sort of exclave or whatever you want to call it,

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00:05:27,270 --> 00:05:33,480

which is in itself, you know, a fascinating realisation about the geography of that region.

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00:05:33,990 --> 00:05:38,700

And I think, you know, given that we both freely admit our kind of ignorance in this area,

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00:05:38,700 --> 00:05:42,120

it seems like we should get as quickly as possible over to the experts.

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00:05:43,440 --> 00:05:49,620

I'm joined by doctor to attempts too long. Kima, who's in the anthropology department at the Royal Temple College in Britain.

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00:05:50,130 --> 00:05:57,840

Uh, doctor. Zosia sanger. Cheryl, uh, who is in the politics department at the Government Circuit College in Mizoram in India,

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and by Shivangi Kowalczyk, who's a PhD student at Oxford's Department for International Development.

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00:06:04,140 --> 00:06:07,170

Let me start with you, Shivani, if that's okay.

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00:06:07,410 --> 00:06:14,310

I mean, your work explores the intersection of youth mobility and Christianity in Northeast India.

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00:06:14,490 --> 00:06:19,020

So could you give me a brief overview of what we're sort of trying to get to grips with today?

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00:06:19,500 --> 00:06:28,980

Uh, firstly, thank you everyone. Basically, directly, I would want to jump into why the three of us have come together for this episode.

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We agree that migration is not an isolated process.

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00:06:33,960 --> 00:06:44,640

Uh, we come from communities and states of the region, and through our work and our experience, we have figured out there are three very major,

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00:06:45,090 --> 00:06:53,700

important institutions or paradigms that very much shape how migration is experienced by different individuals.

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00:06:54,240 --> 00:06:59,880

And these three, uh, paradigms are religion, community and identity.

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00:07:00,210 --> 00:07:05,280

And the two speakers in the context of Nagaland and Mizoram,

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00:07:05,280 --> 00:07:13,679

two distinct states of the region are going to elaborate a little bit on the, uh, overlaps between these three paradigms.

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00:07:13,680 --> 00:07:23,040

But from my own experiences and its inaugural for when I was working with a few migrant students in Delhi, I was made aware of,

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00:07:23,040 --> 00:07:31,080

you know, how ancestors and forefathers came together to redefine community identities back home in the region.

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00:07:31,500 --> 00:07:35,069

And that very much builds on genealogies,

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00:07:35,070 --> 00:07:44,070

colonial genealogies of having acquired missionary education and how Christianity came together as a religion to sort of,

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00:07:44,280 --> 00:07:51,120

you know, redefine different modes of identity. And this was happening somewhere in different stages,

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but it's sort of confluence or it sort of came together even when India was gaining independence somewhere around 1947,

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00:08:00,090 --> 00:08:07,830

when, you know, communities started mobilising for different aspirations or different alternative aspirations for homelands.

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00:08:08,190 --> 00:08:13,800

And these aspirations are honoured and commemorated back in the centre, which is Delhi.

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00:08:14,310 --> 00:08:21,780

And because of the overlap of community, identity and religion, the frontier sort of, you know, as it were,

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00:08:21,780 --> 00:08:29,480

the frontier sort of travels with, you know, people from the region as they travel to different parts of the country.

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00:08:29,490 --> 00:08:38,220

It's not just education or employment or reasons of economic mobility that drives or that shapes migration,

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00:08:38,520 --> 00:08:43,560

especially pertaining to different individuals, communities and states of the region.

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00:08:43,830 --> 00:08:49,980

But it also has to do with how the very idea of a frontier travels with them.

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00:08:50,430 --> 00:08:57,839

And, uh, there has been certain studies done by diehard that here and nationally, in the context of Pakistan,

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00:08:57,840 --> 00:09:04,709

when she talks about how stigma of coming from a certain borderland of Pakistan travels

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with people from border lands as they try to make their lives in a different part.

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00:09:10,140 --> 00:09:20,100

But having said that, this is also a frontier which has its own positioned itself in different ways, with different, uh, forms of governance.

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And those relationships and positionality have not always been, uh, friendly.

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00:09:26,220 --> 00:09:33,420

So missionary education, Christianity and civil society organisations shaped that community identity,

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00:09:33,600 --> 00:09:38,790

which influences or impinges on migrant subjectivities of young people.

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00:09:40,090 --> 00:09:47,110

So so those are those are things that, um, as Shivangi has rightly identified.

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00:09:47,110 --> 00:09:50,169

I mean, these are important regional sort of spaces.

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00:09:50,170 --> 00:09:56,860

And I have to confess my just general ignorance and, and ask for your, your general forgiveness about this.

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00:09:57,040 --> 00:10:01,720

So I know very little about the state of Mizoram other than its geographic location

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and probably the state that it's most physically remote from the Republic of India.

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00:10:08,860 --> 00:10:11,860

So from that sort of complex geographical starting point,

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00:10:11,860 --> 00:10:19,780

it seems likely that the even more complex questions of group identity and nationhood, uh, are inevitably going to emerge.

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00:10:19,780 --> 00:10:25,569

So am I right in thinking that is that correct? And what role does migration, youth, religious movements,

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and all of the other these other frontiers that Shivangi has been talking about, um, play in that?

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00:10:32,230 --> 00:10:35,980

Yes. Rob, thank you for the question. It's an interesting question, I think.

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00:10:36,550 --> 00:10:45,070

And first of all, I fully understand the lack of your knowledge about Mizoram because even some of our fellow citizens in mainland India,

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00:10:45,070 --> 00:10:49,660

still some of them still didn't know that Mizoram is a part of India today.

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Also, as you have stated, uh, Mizoram is uh, located at a remote location in the northeastern part of India.

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And the fact that the culture, the language, the social structure and most of the things that the society holds dear to it are quite distinct,

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are quite different from those that are there in the societies and cultures in mainland India.

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00:11:13,480 --> 00:11:21,460

So the first thing regarding the Mizo mindset, the Mizo psyche, is that there is a tendency to, uh,

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00:11:21,580 --> 00:11:29,770

ask ourselves to ask a question about us and others in the sense that we will be the measles and the others will be those.

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00:11:29,770 --> 00:11:35,380

And that means those who are residing in the mainland India. So that is still embedded strongly in the Mizo psyche today.

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And secondly, what I would like to emphasise is the role that religion plays in the society.

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I think its religion is the one that transforms all society in all its aspects.

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00:11:46,240 --> 00:11:51,190

Uh, we can safely say that, uh, it is religion that makes the Mizo Society what it is today.

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00:11:51,760 --> 00:11:56,350

We have been a Christian dominated state for the past one, 30 years or so.

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00:11:56,890 --> 00:12:03,430

So for the measles and unchristian, uh, residents of the state, that means a non-resident, uh,

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non-Christian resident in Mizoram is like a father of a stranger for us in the Mizo mindset.

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And rather than a non-Christian, non Mizo resident, a Christian nun, Mizo in other parts of the state feels like a distant brother or sister.

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00:12:21,970 --> 00:12:27,160

That is the extent of how religion and religious affiliation occupies an important place in Mizo society.

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00:12:27,520 --> 00:12:37,540

And a testament to that fact will be the existence of peace for over 40 years, of the design of the designing of the peace accord back in 1986.

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00:12:38,050 --> 00:12:42,610

Since 1966, Mizoram was hampered by the Mizo independence movement,

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00:12:43,120 --> 00:12:48,940

but after the signing of the peace accord, no further violence have been taking place in Mizoram till date.

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So that I think, is a testament of how community feeling and how the belongingness,

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00:12:54,880 --> 00:13:02,020

the homogeneity of the Mizo society and culture contributes to the, uh, lasting peace in Mizoram.

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And thirdly, it is somewhat like a societal norm for any Mizo youth, uh, to be a member of a state wide organisation.

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There are so many uh, youth organisations and uh, women organisations, church organisations,

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00:13:16,090 --> 00:13:22,060

civil society organisations in the state, it doesn't matter whether they are active members or they are inactive members.

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It has somewhat become a societal, um requirement for any Mizo use to be a member in any one of these organisations.

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And I think it is an interesting coincidence that the first youth organisation ever to

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be as a bridge in Mizoram is also established by the Christian missionaries themselves.

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00:13:42,370 --> 00:13:48,490

So we can say that, uh, the religion of religion is the harbinger of the youth movements and youth activities in this era.

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And lastly, although, um, although early Mizo historical writings regarding the origin of the measles are lacking,

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one thing that, uh, one thing that we can, uh, establish as a fact is that we, the measles, are an ethnic migrant group.

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We are an ethnic migrant group who have migrated, uh, somewhere from eastern Central Asia,

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uh, some 200, 300 years back and have settled to where we are now in Mizoram today.

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Uh, the thing is that migrations and displacements are particularly due to colonial, uh,

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administration like demarcation of state boundaries and ethnic violence have placed many Mizo ethnic tribes outside Mizoram,

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00:14:31,870 --> 00:14:38,710

particularly in Manipur, in Assam, in the original Pradesh, uh in Tripura and invalidation Myanmar as well.

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So what? Ties these ethnic Mizo tribes across state and international borders.

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00:14:44,080 --> 00:14:48,390

It's, I think, first of all, is the common ancestry. We all share the common ancestry.

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00:14:48,400 --> 00:14:52,060

We all share, uh, similar cultures. We all share similar traditions.

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And the most important thing is our feeling of belongingness to a particular community that is the Mizo community.

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00:14:58,630 --> 00:15:00,480

So it is, uh, here that, uh,

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I think migration plays a vital role in the formation of group identity and perception of Mizo nation and sentiment as a whole.

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So we may be residing in Myanmar, we may be residing in trip, or we may not be within Mizoram itself.

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But it doesn't matter because all Musos have an affinity to that particular nomenclature known as Mizo community.

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That's fantastic. Really, really interesting.

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00:15:23,110 --> 00:15:30,890

Um, so to attempt to you also look at the role of Christianity, but in this case Christian missionary work, um,

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00:15:30,920 --> 00:15:36,430

and community building in a very specific group in another remote part of Northeast India,

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which is the I hope I'm pronouncing that correctly, the our indigenous community in Nagaland.

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00:15:42,670 --> 00:15:49,420

Um, now, I mean, I tend to look at Christianity in India as a somewhat imposed remnant of the colonial era.

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Um, but your analysis looks at it in a more nuanced way, I think.

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00:15:53,740 --> 00:15:58,479

And so can you explain a bit what you mean? Firstly, by imminent religious beliefs,

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which I think is part of what you what what you study and how that relates to the adoption of Christianity in the our community in Nagaland.

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00:16:07,120 --> 00:16:14,410

Yeah. Um, that's really interesting. You see, when we talk about Christianity, um, in Nagaland itself, I mean, um,

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00:16:15,280 --> 00:16:20,979

it came in the year 1872, doctor, cleric, um, kind of was the first, uh, missionary.

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00:16:20,980 --> 00:16:25,629

And when you look at Nagaland today, then, um, according to the population, um, I mean,

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00:16:25,630 --> 00:16:31,390

in any place of the world, we have the highest percentage of Baptist Christians in the Nagaland as such.

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00:16:31,390 --> 00:16:34,690

I mean, if you look at the population of the Nagaland, uh, percentages accordingly.

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And that's quite interesting because when you look at how Christianity itself came about,

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um, I mean, there are a lot of historical junctures into these aspects,

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but I'm not going to this, but one of the way by which, uh,

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00:16:45,610 --> 00:16:51,370

popular kind of reached Nagaland was through one of the, uh, Assamese missionary, the state nearby, Nagaland.

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Right. So he reached down Nargis. And uh, one of the interesting thing aspect about that also has to do with how, you know,

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00:16:59,200 --> 00:17:03,489

the, the, um, missionaries in that sense, kind of consider what places really are,

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00:17:03,490 --> 00:17:07,450

because one of the way by which they consider the kind of native places where that,

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00:17:07,450 --> 00:17:10,780

okay, these were places which were inhabited by the evil spirit as such.

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00:17:11,080 --> 00:17:15,250

And so they wanted to eradicate that aspect. And in order to do that, you know,

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00:17:15,250 --> 00:17:22,809

one of the things that they wanted to do was this aspect that they want to actually establish a kind of place where Christians reside in that sense,

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00:17:22,810 --> 00:17:26,620

and where Christians, Christian light emanate to the other villages as such.

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00:17:26,920 --> 00:17:33,100

And obviously people have called that kind of place as call us, um, you know, Christian missionary station, something like that.

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00:17:33,100 --> 00:17:40,749

Right. When I talk about this aspect of imminence as such. And there was, you know, indigenous religion that already existed among the analogous,

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um, which I conceptualise as animism through the perspective of new animism.

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00:17:45,490 --> 00:17:51,340

Right. So it's it's part of the whole, uh, rubric of or the aspect of animism as such.

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00:17:51,700 --> 00:17:56,490

Uh, I just put in some of the new work that is there in animism, in different fields of study.

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00:17:57,130 --> 00:18:06,010

Now, when I look at the imminent aspect of it, I am also talking about how the native people, the all Nagas, interpreted Christianity as such.

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00:18:06,010 --> 00:18:12,339

And the thing that I am kind of pointing towards is that, okay, they interpreted Christianity from a lens,

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00:18:12,340 --> 00:18:20,140

a lens from where how they understood the world, us and they understood or they interacted the world through the animistic perspective in that sense.

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00:18:20,380 --> 00:18:27,820

And this is where the way they adopted Christianity in that sense has that element, their own native element that is there in Christianity.

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00:18:27,820 --> 00:18:35,500

And that is something which I point out to in terms of the imminence of, uh, you know, making Christianity native to the people itself.

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00:18:35,500 --> 00:18:41,170

And that is where when we say Christianity as a Christian society and the way the belief practice, it is, uh,

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00:18:41,590 --> 00:18:48,999

somewhat very much different from obviously what we would call as Christianity in general or Christianity, the text as such in the Bible as such.

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00:18:49,000 --> 00:18:53,920

Right. The interplay of this, um, is something which is very important, um,

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00:18:53,920 --> 00:19:00,190

in terms of the people in the community, the idea of God is something which obviously, I mean, in,

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00:19:00,190 --> 00:19:02,049

in terms of the native language,

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00:19:02,050 --> 00:19:09,160

the idea of God do not exist and one of the word by which they actually use or the word that we they used to actually signify,

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00:19:09,160 --> 00:19:10,960

the Christian God is called Sangram.

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00:19:11,200 --> 00:19:18,110

Now, tangram is a native word actually, which they actually use to actually signify to those spiritual beings, right?

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00:19:18,140 --> 00:19:19,330

The other beings that were there.

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00:19:19,600 --> 00:19:27,429

And by looking at this aspect, you know, uh, when you when you look at people as such, you know, the the life has been constructed,

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00:19:27,430 --> 00:19:34,600

the society has been constructed around this aspect that, you know, you actually see spilling off in their everyday political life.

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00:19:34,600 --> 00:19:39,400

And this is where one of the idea that I talk about is this idea of Nagaland for Christ.

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00:19:39,720 --> 00:19:49,500

Nagaland. A place, a boundary, a state which actually, uh, talks about it as, uh, an aspect, a significant aspect of which actually, you know.

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00:19:50,460 --> 00:19:58,200

I'll kind of move towards this aspect of, okay, this place or this geography is something which is for Christ Jesus Christ.

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00:19:58,440 --> 00:20:05,040

And when you look at this aspect of this, snuggling for Christ obviously came about during the 1950s when there were actually,

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00:20:05,190 --> 00:20:09,870

um, another movement emerging different kinds of sects of Naga movement that were emerging.

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00:20:10,110 --> 00:20:17,969

And so people kind of took this Naga line for Christ, firstly to the mean that, okay, the Nagaland as we as a state or as a,

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00:20:17,970 --> 00:20:26,580

as a boundary as a place is actually meant for Christians and we are against any kind of other forms of religion or any other forms of idea such.

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00:20:27,000 --> 00:20:29,790

Another thing that it asserts is also this aspect that okay,

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00:20:30,120 --> 00:20:34,649

since we are Christians and one of the things that we do is also that we continue to eliminate

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00:20:34,650 --> 00:20:39,000

our presence among all the other neighbouring states or places that are there around the world.

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00:20:39,210 --> 00:20:42,510

And one of the thing there, here in Nagaland for Christ, that they people,

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00:20:42,510 --> 00:20:46,440

the Christians and they talk about is because when we talk about love for Christ,

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00:20:46,440 --> 00:20:52,889

this is not a movement which is only for the Christian community as such, or people who are in the church or pastors or such.

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00:20:52,890 --> 00:20:56,880

But this we are also movement of of the national leaders themselves in that sense.

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00:20:57,090 --> 00:21:05,489

And this is where they talk about decided. Okay. When we talk about Natalie for Christ, it is it also has to do also accept this idea that,

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00:21:05,490 --> 00:21:09,180

you know, when we when we talk about the political realm or such and how we decide,

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00:21:09,510 --> 00:21:17,459

uh, the political aspect in this state itself is actually being detected by the, uh, Christian faith that we kind of believe and adhere to.

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00:21:17,460 --> 00:21:21,720

And this is how when we look at historically, you know, during the post-independence and,

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00:21:22,050 --> 00:21:27,000

uh, after independence, you know, this idea kind of seemed to kind of emerge.

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00:21:27,330 --> 00:21:31,050

And this is where, uh, you know, the idea of missionaries comes into the picture.

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00:21:32,320 --> 00:21:36,130

Thank you so much. That's a very comprehensive and very interesting answer.

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00:21:36,760 --> 00:21:42,250

Shivangi, I'm just coming back to you. I mean, you obviously began by talking about, um,

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00:21:42,280 --> 00:21:46,419

the your experiences in Delhi and we've been talking about internal migrations

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00:21:46,420 --> 00:21:50,770

here is just as complex and politically fraught as international migration.

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00:21:51,190 --> 00:21:56,809

And we're also looking at what many people would perceive to be a kind of colonial tool of the exercise of power,

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00:21:56,810 --> 00:22:01,560

rather, Christianity as a sort of grassroots community building movement.

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00:22:01,570 --> 00:22:04,990

So I kind of feel like we're messing with a lot of people,

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00:22:04,990 --> 00:22:10,180

but a lot of people in the UK is anyway preconceived perceptions of migration and identity here.

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00:22:10,720 --> 00:22:14,590

How do you think that helps or hinders an understanding of contemporary India?

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00:22:15,340 --> 00:22:15,909

So what?

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00:22:15,910 --> 00:22:26,440

I think we have been trying to talk also to a certain extent, deconstruct or understand the term migrant itself and how it sort of works with,

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00:22:26,470 --> 00:22:31,900

uh, different subjectivities of different people from, uh, different parts of the region.

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00:22:32,200 --> 00:22:41,409

Now, uh, I think, uh, to a great extent, one of the things that I wanted to also talk about was remembrance and commemoration.

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00:22:41,410 --> 00:22:50,440

After staying in another, completely different city when I was, uh, you know, talking to young people was that I came across certain missionary, uh,

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00:22:50,440 --> 00:22:57,520

leaders who had actually gone to, uh, the South in present day southern Manipur hills and Lucia Hills,

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00:22:57,910 --> 00:23:03,670

and these were parts of the region way back, uh, before the 1950s.

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00:23:03,910 --> 00:23:12,010

And this is a map that has now changed because a lot of, uh, communities and a lot of movements now they have their own states.

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00:23:12,460 --> 00:23:20,350

But, uh, there was like through archival research, I came across a missionary and, uh, his name was Buddha,

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00:23:20,800 --> 00:23:27,459

and he wrote letters to the prime minister, uh, Jawaharlal Nehru asking for recognition.

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00:23:27,460 --> 00:23:36,940

Right. And then there were different officials, uh, and different secretaries who were working with the state departments then who said that,

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00:23:37,210 --> 00:23:46,810

you know, there is this British, it's Norgrove or, um, or Administrator James Shakespeare, who has done this classification of communities.

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00:23:46,810 --> 00:23:51,639

And your community is not recognised as a separate community there.

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00:23:51,640 --> 00:23:59,650

So you don't need recognition. So those sort of hierarchies of recognition, which existed in colonial times,

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00:24:00,070 --> 00:24:06,460

and those were something that were, uh, impinging on, you know, young people who collaborated with me.

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00:24:07,060 --> 00:24:08,770

When we talk about migration,

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00:24:08,770 --> 00:24:18,399

I think that what it definitely does is that it highlights the nuances that emerges as a result of the overlap between these institutions,

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00:24:18,400 --> 00:24:22,060

that we don't see migration as an isolated process.

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00:24:22,330 --> 00:24:29,170

And when it comes to talking about larger politics in India today, I feel that to a certain extent,

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00:24:29,170 --> 00:24:38,260

it's a very, uh, risky thing to do because you never know actually how, uh, people perceive it.

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00:24:38,470 --> 00:24:41,890

But the discourse, uh, that is there, you know, uh,

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00:24:41,890 --> 00:24:50,049

I feel to a great extent it's very much mediated by what communities think of

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00:24:50,050 --> 00:24:55,270

themselves in relation to other communities with whom they may have shared land,

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00:24:55,720 --> 00:25:02,230

shared sorry, contagious land. And there have, you know, emerged issues and contentions.

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00:25:02,650 --> 00:25:07,810

And now they are asking for different forms of identification.

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00:25:08,170 --> 00:25:20,079

And of course, as the speakers have already said, in different eras, both colonial and missionary movements have had different, uh, roles to play.

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00:25:20,080 --> 00:25:23,830

And then consequently, you also have parallel political movements.

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00:25:24,130 --> 00:25:31,810

So I would say that migration to a certain extent, and how individuals whose communities have lived those movements,

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00:25:32,170 --> 00:25:37,750

migration, helps you to recount them or to revisit them because it's always in memory.

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00:25:38,380 --> 00:25:43,420

This conversation, I think, is very much influenced by that interplay, you know,

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00:25:43,420 --> 00:25:52,090

between memory migration and between how the institutions of community, identity, religion work back home.

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00:25:52,930 --> 00:25:59,860

Super interesting. Those are sangha. Can you tell us a bit about what the history of religious movements in Northeast India,

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00:26:00,130 --> 00:26:05,920

as you tell us about, um, this is the present and and arguably, I mean,

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00:26:05,920 --> 00:26:09,489

if you can tell us anything about the what you think the future of, uh,

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00:26:09,490 --> 00:26:15,880

of the region might be and how much of a role does migration play in, in that whole process?

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00:26:16,660 --> 00:26:18,160

What do we have to keep in mind?

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00:26:18,160 --> 00:26:28,240

First of all, is that the north eastern part of India is a region which is characterised by diverse cultures, ethnicities and religious faiths.

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00:26:28,840 --> 00:26:37,190

So I don't think that I can point out at. Particular religious movement that could shape the cause and future of the region as a whole.

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00:26:38,000 --> 00:26:44,389

But because each state has a majority population that professes certain beliefs

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00:26:44,390 --> 00:26:50,010

and face a religious face at the same time as I have said regarding uh,

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00:26:50,150 --> 00:27:01,130

with regards to Mizoram, religion and religious uh movements have played a vital role in identity formation in most of the northeastern states.

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00:27:01,790 --> 00:27:09,800

Having said that, I think it would not be wrong to say that all major religions have made incursions into the noughties.

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00:27:10,550 --> 00:27:13,880

Uh, so let's take the example of my home state, Mizoram.

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00:27:14,420 --> 00:27:25,480

We used to say that the measures are 100% Christian, but judging from the statistics that we see from the latest, uh,

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00:27:25,490 --> 00:27:34,370

2021 census published by the Government of India, 86% of the population in Mizoram are Christians,

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00:27:34,550 --> 00:27:40,430

while there are 14% who are professing other faiths and religions.

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00:27:40,970 --> 00:27:46,280

So I think from that simple statistics alone, what we can see is that that, uh,

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00:27:46,280 --> 00:27:54,710

14% other religious feeds are made up of migrants who migrated and came to Mizoram for various purposes.

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00:27:55,430 --> 00:27:59,989

So I think it would be fair to assume that each of the northeastern states have

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00:27:59,990 --> 00:28:05,120

a sizeable population who profess religions and of various religious faiths,

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00:28:05,570 --> 00:28:08,990

even though they are the minority in the states that they are residing.

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00:28:09,680 --> 00:28:17,360

And besides an interesting observation that one can make regarding the North eastern states from a religious viewpoint,

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00:28:17,360 --> 00:28:24,500

is that religious violence or clashes have seldom occurred in the history of the northeastern region.

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00:28:24,710 --> 00:28:31,250

Religious harmony and interfaith understanding is one of the remarkable hallmarks of the northeastern states.

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00:28:31,790 --> 00:28:38,809

Uh, in the future. Also, this interfaith harmony and interfaith understanding would still persist if this, uh,

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00:28:38,810 --> 00:28:45,710

smooth flow and, uh, internalisation of this migration continues in each of the northeastern states.

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00:28:46,400 --> 00:28:50,990

I mean, this brings me back to you, um, two terms who we were talking about,

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00:28:50,990 --> 00:28:54,800

you know, the emergence of Christianity among the among the owl community.

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00:28:55,070 --> 00:29:01,010

To what extent does your work reveal sameness or difference within the teachings of traditional

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00:29:01,010 --> 00:29:06,320

indigenous religions among the owl people and this of Christian Baptist teachings that many have adopted?

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00:29:06,810 --> 00:29:12,440

What do you think that tells us about about cultures, change and identity more broadly?

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00:29:13,250 --> 00:29:18,979

One of the thing about, um, teaching as such, and one of the things that I want to try to uncover is, okay,

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00:29:18,980 --> 00:29:27,300

what is the method by which they went on the missionaries and this century early missionaries, when they went on evangelising the native people?

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00:29:27,320 --> 00:29:34,399

Uh, not alone. And one of the things that I, uh, continue to kind of, uh, looked at is this literature, literatures where,

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00:29:34,400 --> 00:29:38,420

okay, what we're the kind of education that the missionaries were going through during the time.

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00:29:38,630 --> 00:29:45,800

And, um, there were a lot of, um, uh, what they call as the mission methodology in the sense of how to evangelise, in the sense.

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00:29:45,800 --> 00:29:47,330

Right, uh, to different communities.

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00:29:47,600 --> 00:29:53,839

But one of the thing that I kind of found out was when, um, the missionary and specifically when I talk about E.W. Clark,

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00:29:53,840 --> 00:30:01,850

um, when Clark came to Nagaland and, uh, saw the native people, in that sense, I believe he had a kind of, uh,

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00:30:01,850 --> 00:30:09,409

change in mind as to how do I kind of interact with these people and, you know, bring this Christianity, the gospel, to the people in that sense,

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00:30:09,410 --> 00:30:19,520

because the missionary who came later on, um, after E.W. Clark, um, Haggard and Perrin, um, they were two of the missionary family that came.

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00:30:19,790 --> 00:30:26,930

And, um, these people had a really a different perspective as to saying that, you know, the native people in that sense,

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00:30:27,170 --> 00:30:32,450

uh, their belief and practices, which that they should animism should not be actually practice anymore.

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00:30:32,450 --> 00:30:38,959

And it blew. Clark had a very different perspective in that sense, because it has a certain had certain leniency as to,

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00:30:38,960 --> 00:30:42,520

okay, what can the practice one get to do, what can they not do?

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00:30:42,530 --> 00:30:50,420

And one of the things that they continued to talk about was this, uh, usage of rice beer, you know, the alcohol that is made through rice, right?

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00:30:50,450 --> 00:30:53,599

Fermented rice. And how good that person was. Not really.

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00:30:53,600 --> 00:30:57,139

Um, they said that. Okay. As Christians, you you do not do this, right?

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00:30:57,140 --> 00:31:06,070

You don't drink this. I mean, us, but one of the ways by which you identify as Christian is you give away this aspect of that, um, like that.

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00:31:06,110 --> 00:31:13,399

So there are many other aspects to that which were actually different in terms of how the missionaries who came to them South perceive.

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00:31:13,400 --> 00:31:18,830

What do you need to give up the cultural aspect that need to give up to be able to be a Christian as such,

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00:31:19,070 --> 00:31:23,780

in terms of teachings as such and the similarities and differences that we talk about,

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00:31:24,110 --> 00:31:31,099

uh, um, is he one of the things by which the Christians are based, which native are analogous in that sense?

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00:31:31,100 --> 00:31:34,880

Kind of. We're attracted to Christians. We're not so much of preaching as such.

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00:31:34,910 --> 00:31:40,340

It was true singing, you know, um, songs were one of the things by which you were very much attracted to.

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00:31:40,610 --> 00:31:45,169

Another aspect has to do with when Christians come together and, you know, they saw that,

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00:31:45,170 --> 00:31:49,129

okay, they were actually gathering and they were actually doing these, uh, prayers.

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00:31:49,130 --> 00:31:52,310

Everyone was sounding some sounds together, you know, and I was like,

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00:31:52,610 --> 00:31:56,929

that sounds like a gibberish sound is becoming all people, uh, crying, people praying.

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00:31:56,930 --> 00:32:03,440

And that was also something which was really interesting to people. I saw people coming together and just closing the eyes and praying.

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00:32:03,440 --> 00:32:06,020

And, you know, this meditative process was really interesting to them.

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00:32:06,230 --> 00:32:13,130

So initially on verse, it was not the kind of a systematic teaching or doctrinal teachings or anything as such, but it was true.

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00:32:13,190 --> 00:32:19,160

So the cultural aspect which they found affinity towards, right, the which the missionaries brought by.

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00:32:19,370 --> 00:32:29,449

And that was an interesting aspect. When you look at it historically, I don't have as much of theological knowledge as the other dimensions are.

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00:32:29,450 --> 00:32:35,089

So but one thing that I would definitely add is that I have also seen a lot of changes,

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00:32:35,090 --> 00:32:40,340

because there's been changes in terms of urbanisation, introduction of social media.

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00:32:40,910 --> 00:32:46,880

Uh, in my case, young people have moved around for different aspirational goals.

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00:32:47,330 --> 00:32:53,840

Community is something that they had lived through it subjectively at an individual level.

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00:32:54,380 --> 00:33:03,470

But what I'm trying to basically what we are trying to basically say is that if we are to look at migration in the context of the region,

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00:33:03,470 --> 00:33:06,170

then I think we are just trying to,

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00:33:06,470 --> 00:33:17,030

you know, start a conversation on regional similarities or commonalities that are common factors that one can consider while talking about the region.

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00:33:17,600 --> 00:33:31,280

And, uh, one more thing that I would add is that, uh, yes, when it comes to talking about any of these processes, uh, there will be changes.

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00:33:31,280 --> 00:33:32,839

As for the individual,

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00:33:32,840 --> 00:33:41,930

and this is something that both Sarah so talked about in terms of community and talked about in terms of indigenous Christianity.

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00:33:42,320 --> 00:33:48,770

So we are not trying to set a template for understanding these processes in terms of the region.

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00:33:49,040 --> 00:33:53,449

I think we are just trying to have a conversation as per our research,

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00:33:53,450 --> 00:34:00,469

our lived experiences, and, uh, we would be happy to engage with these teams in the future.

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00:34:00,470 --> 00:34:06,650

And I do thank everyone for engaging with my pitch and for giving us this space.

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00:34:07,100 --> 00:34:10,879

And, uh, thank you so much, Rob, for the wonderful conversation.

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00:34:10,880 --> 00:34:17,780

And, uh, to Delfin for the technical help and Jacqueline for being there for us.

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00:34:17,780 --> 00:34:26,570

And, uh, also, Jacqueline is the one who pushed me to think about migrant, uh, the idea of what it means to be a migrant.

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00:34:26,840 --> 00:34:33,770

And that's how I actually started engaging with the work of both Sara third and local mayor.

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00:34:34,160 --> 00:34:38,959

So having this conversation with both of them is my privilege.

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00:34:38,960 --> 00:34:42,650

Thank you all. You've been listening to the Migration Oxford podcast.

331

00:34:42,650 --> 00:34:45,050
I'm Jacki Brodhead, and I'm Rob McNeil.