

The Role of the Hao/Hau Fa in Tangkhul Hunting Traditions and Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Sochanphy A. Shimray

Research Scholar, Department of Cultural and Creative Studies, North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong Meghalaya -793022, India.

Abstract:

The Hao/Hau Fa (Tangkhul indigenous dog) has played a crucial role in the Tangkhul Naga hunting traditions and indigenous knowledge systems. As an essential companion in hunting, the Hao/Hau Fa embodies deep ecological knowledge, symbiotic human- animal relationships and cultural symbolism. This paper examines the role of the Hao/Hau Fa in traditional hunting practices, its training and its significance in Tangkhul oral narratives and customary laws. Additionally, it explores how this indigenous breed encodes ecological intelligence, resource management and indigenous epistemologies. By analysing oral traditions, ethnographic accounts and historical records, this study aims to highlight the role of the Hao/Hau Fa in sustaining Tangkhul hunting traditions and its contemporary relevance in conservation discourses.

Keywords: Hao/Hau Fa, Tangkhul Hunting Traditions, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Ecological Intelligence, Human-Animal Relationships, Oral Narratives, Customary Law, Cultural Heritage and Conservation.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous dogs have played a crucial role in various communities worldwide, serving as sentries, protectors, companions and even sources of warmth. Their significance extends beyond mere domestication, deeply intertwining with the cultural, economic and survival strategies of many societies. One of the primary roles of indigenous dogs across different cultures has been to act as sentinels, warning their human companions of approaching threats. In North America, early accounts describe how these dogs helped safeguard communities from both human intruders and predators. Charlevoix (1761) noted that indigenous dogs played a crucial role in keeping dangerous animals, such as black bears (*Ursus americanus*), at bay. Similarly, among the Mongolian nomads, native breeds like the “Bankhar” dog have traditionally been used to protect livestock from wolves and other predators (Hovens & Tungalaktuja, 2005; Olson & Fuller, 2017). Beyond their role as guardians, indigenous dogs have also provided companionship and physical warmth. French missionary Father Paul Le Jeune, during his travels with the Innu (Montagnais) people in the early 17th century, initially found the presence of large packs of dogs to be an inconvenience. However, he eventually acknowledged their value, particularly during cold weather. As he recorded, these dogs often slept indoors and provided much-needed warmth by lying on people’s bodies (Le Jeune, 1897b: 43).

The Wabanaki nations, which include groups such as the Mi'kmaq and Abenaki, occasionally relied on dogs for transportation, particularly during the winter months when snow covered the ground. Historical accounts suggest that these Indigenous communities adapted their travel and hunting practices to the harsh winter environment by using dogs to pull sleds. French explorer Nicolas Denys (1908: 360) documented this practice among the 17th century Mi'kmaq, describing how they harnessed dogs like horses, using them to pull small sledges that carried hunting supplies. This method allowed Mi'kmaq hunters to move efficiently across the snow while remaining unburdened by their equipment, making it easier for them to track and hunt game. The Abenaki also made use of dogs for transportation, as seen in historical events such as the 1704 raid on Deerfield during Queen Anne's War. In this instance, an Abenaki war party, which had taken Stephen Williams captive, employed sleds and dogs to transport wounded warriors from the battlefield (Williams 1889: 5). This suggests that the practice was not limited to hunting but also had military applications, enabling warriors to move injured comrades over long distances. These historical accounts highlight the ingenuity of the Wabanaki nations in adapting to their environment. By utilising dogs for transportation, they were able to navigate snowy landscapes with greater ease, whether for hunting, travel or warfare. This practice reflects their deep understanding of their surroundings and their ability to develop effective solutions to meet their needs.

Indigenous dog breeds have played an essential role in human societies across the world, serving not only as protectors and hunting companions but also as integral figures in cultural traditions. Their significance extends beyond practical use, as they are deeply embedded in the social and spiritual lives of various communities. Understanding their historical roles is crucial in recognising the need for their preservation and continued appreciation. Among the Tangkhul Naga people, the Hao/Hau Fā is an indigenous dog breed that has been a vital part of their traditional way of life. The Tangkhuls, residing in the northeastern region of India and the northwestern part of Myanmar, have long practiced hunting, which was not only a means of survival but also an important cultural practice that symbolised honour, masculinity and social status. Hunting provided food as well as raw materials for clothing, decorations and ceremonial items. Furthermore, the Hao/Hau Fā played a key role in these hunting traditions, assisting hunters with its intelligence, loyalty and remarkable tracking skills (Pheirei, 2024). In addition to its hunting skills, the Hao/Hau Fā is known for its fierce loyalty and protective nature, making it an excellent companion and guardian for its owners. For the Hao/Hau people (Tangkhuls), hunting was more than just acquiring food—it was an expression of bravery and skill. The meat of hunted animals was an important food source. At the same time, their skins were used for Pamkhong (traditional stool), decoration and garments, particularly by the Luhupas, who fashioned them into mufflers and headgear (Pheirei, 2024). Certain animals held special significance—wild boars, tigers (Odyuo, 2013: 18) and bears were particularly esteemed and their teeth and bones were crafted into ornamental wear. The horns and skulls of hunted animals were often displayed as trophies (Hudson, 1911), serving as symbols of a hunter's prowess and courage.

A man's ability to hunt was directly tied to his social status and honour. In traditional Hao/Hau society, a man who had never hunted or claimed a wild animal was considered weak and unfit to protect and provide for his family (Pheirei, 2024). Hunting was, therefore, not only a means of survival but a rite of passage that demonstrated a man's capability and dignity. The act of hunting and the successful display of its rewards reinforced social hierarchies and reaffirmed the masculine identity of hunters within the community. The Hao/Hau Fā, an indigenous Tangkhul dog breed, has played a crucial role in traditional hunting practices, reflecting the deep interconnection between the Tangkhul people and their environment.

This paper explores the breed's significance in hunting, its methods of training and its representation in Tangkhul oral narratives and customary laws. Beyond its utilitarian role, the Hao/Hau Fā embodies ecological intelligence, indigenous knowledge systems and resource management strategies. By examining oral traditions, ethnographic records and historical sources, this study highlights the breed's enduring importance in Tangkhul culture and its relevance in contemporary conservation efforts.

Area of the Study

Phungcham village, located in Ukhrul district, has been selected as the primary study area for this research. Recognised as one of the oldest Tangkhul Naga settlements, Phungcham holds significant historical and cultural value. The village is rich in oral traditions, including narratives related to the Hao/Hau Fā, an indigenous Tangkhul dog breed. Notably, Phungcham actively promotes the conservation and recognition of the Hao/Hau Fā by organising an annual event dedicated to this breed. The selection of this village is thus crucial for understanding the cultural significance, historical consciousness and ecological role of the Hao/Hau Fā within Tangkhul society.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach, utilising multiple sources of data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of Hao/Hau Fā (Tangkhul indigenous hunting dog) within Tangkhul hunting traditions and indigenous knowledge systems. The methodology integrates participant observation, semi-structured interviews and ethnographic document analysis, which together provide a holistic view of the subject. The study also follows ethical research principles to ensure that the rights, dignity and well-being of participants are protected.

Results

The Hao/Hau Fā is an indigenous dog breed known for its exceptional intelligence, loyalty, and strong hunting abilities. One of its most remarkable traits is its extraordinary sense of smell, which allows it to track the scent of an animal even days (3-5 days) after it has passed (Horam, 2023). Before modern communication methods, villagers relied on word-of-mouth to share news, including reports of animal tracks. By the time a hunter discovered footprints and gathered fellow hunters, several days might have already passed. However, the Hao/Hau Sāfā, with its keen olfactory senses, could still pick up the scent and track the animal despite this delay. This impressive ability makes the breed highly valuable for hunting and it undergoes rigorous training to enhance its skills.

Beyond its hunting capabilities, the Hao/Hau Fā is deeply valued for its fierce loyalty and protective instincts, making it an excellent guardian and companion. The breed has several distinctive physical features, such as a black mole on the tongue, extra toes and slightly different paw structures compared to other dogs (Hongchui, 2023). Unlike many hunting dogs that require a meat-heavy diet, the Hao/Hau Fā is highly adaptable and can thrive on all human foods, making it easier to raise. Additionally, this breed is incredibly intuitive and intelligent. Remarkably, Hao/Hau Fā puppies can recognise their owners within a month of birth, forming a strong bond with them almost immediately.

In the past, male Hao/Hau Fā dogs had their ears and tails pared to differentiate them from wild animals. This practice was not just for appearance but also had practical benefits. With pared ears, it helped improve hearing by reducing obstruction, while the pared tail prevented the dog from signalling fear or submission, making it appear more confident in confrontational situations (Horam, 2024). This process was carefully

performed when the puppies reached three weeks old, requiring skill and precision to ensure the correct points were cut. Such traditional practices reflected the deep relationship between the Hao/Hau Fə and their human companions.

Elders believe that the Hao/Hau Fə was once much larger, reaching heights of three feet or more. However, due to generations of crossbreeding, their size has diminished over time. In Phungcham Village, efforts are being made to preserve and promote the breed, and some dogs still grow up to 2-2.5 feet tall. Traditionally, these dogs were raised mainly for hunting rather than just as pets or guard dogs. Hunters preferred smaller, longer-bodied Hao/Hau Fə dogs because they were more agile and efficient during hunts (Horam, 2024). Selective training based on intelligence and physical ability led to the well-known saying: “All Sāfə are Hao/Hau Fə, but not all Hao/Hau Fə are Sāfə”.

This distinction highlights the existence of two primary categories of the breed:

1. Hao/Haufə – Kept at home for protection and companionship.
2. Hao/Hau Sāfə – Specially trained for hunting.

For Tangkhul Naga hunters, a hunt is never complete without their trusted Hao/Hau Fə companion. Even with modern hunting equipment, the breed remains an essential part of hunting traditions. While hunting is now regulated and practiced only during specific seasons, the deep-rooted cultural significance of the Hao/Hau Fə persists. When a hunter successfully captures an animal, the meat is distributed according to tradition. Portions are allocated to the Hao/Hau Fə, the Hao/Hau Sāfə (hunting dog) in particular, the hunter who made the kill, the person who first touched the animal, the owner of the weapon used and all those who participated in the hunt. The dog, however, always receives the head—a long-standing tradition still observed in Phungcham today.

The process of selecting an intelligent Hao/Hau Fə begins at an early age. When puppies are around two to three weeks old, a preferred one is chosen and given a name. To establish a bond, the owner feeds it by placing their saliva on the food. If the puppy recognises and responds to the same person the next day, it is considered highly intelligent and suitable for training. Training the Hao/Hau Fə was traditionally straightforward yet highly effective. Puppies learn through direct observation, following their owners in daily activities and gradually developing their instincts. As they matured, their intelligence and understanding deepened, much like a human’s learning process. A common saying among the Tangkhul people reflects this: “The older it gets, the wiser it becomes.” This highlights the breed’s intelligence, adaptability and strong bond with its owner.

The Hao/Hau Fə dog breed possesses distinct reproductive characteristics that set it apart from other domesticated canines. Unlike most dog breeds, which typically experience multiple heat cycles per year, the Hao/Hau Fə has a unique mating season that occurs only once annually. This singular reproductive cycle influences not only the breed’s population dynamics but also its mating behaviour, which is deeply rooted in strong pair-bonding tendencies. One of the most remarkable aspects of the Hao/Hau Fə’s reproductive behaviour is its strict monogamous inclination. Female dogs of this breed are known for their selective mating, choosing a single partner and rejecting advances from all other males. This exclusivity is not commonly observed in domesticated dogs, making the Hao/Hau Fə’s reproductive traits highly distinctive. The males, in turn, exhibit an equally strong sense of loyalty and commitment to their mates. They are known to be fiercely protective, often engaging in territorial disputes to defend their chosen partners. These confrontations, though not excessively aggressive, serve as a demonstration of their dedication and natural instinct to ensure the safety of their mates.

The deep-seated pair-bonding behaviour of the Hao/Hau Fə reflects its strong-willed and loyal nature.

Unlike breeds that may exhibit more indiscriminate mating habits, this indigenous dog follows a structured and instinct-driven approach to reproduction. The once-a-year mating season further reinforces the stability of these pair bonds, as both partners remain closely connected throughout the year, fostering a sense of companionship and shared responsibility. The reproductive traits of the Hao/Hau Fə may also hold ecological and evolutionary significance. The controlled mating season and selective pair-bonding could contribute to the preservation of genetic integrity within the breed. This natural mechanism may have played a role in maintaining the breed's distinctive characteristics, including its physical endurance, intelligence and adaptability to the challenging terrain of the Tangkhul homeland. Overall, the unique reproductive traits and mating behaviour of the Hao/Hau Fə make it an exceptional breed that stands apart from other domesticated dogs. Its annual mating season, selective monogamy and strong territorial instincts reflect a complex and deeply ingrained reproductive strategy that has likely evolved over generations. These traits not only define the breed's biological characteristics but also reinforce its cultural and symbolic significance within Tangkhul society.

The Hao/Hau Fə is more than just a hunting dog; it is a symbol of tradition, intelligence and unwavering loyalty among the Tangkhul Naga people. With its exceptional tracking abilities, adaptability, and deep bond with its owners, the breed continues to play a crucial role in both hunting and daily life. Efforts to preserve and promote the breed in Phungcham Village are vital in ensuring that the legacy of the Hao/Hau Fə remains strong for future generations.

Discussions

For generations, the Tangkhul community has relied on the Hao/Hau Fə in hunting, particularly in forested landscapes where human tracking alone was insufficient. The breed is known for its keen sense of smell, intelligence and agility, making it an invaluable companion in hunting large and small game. Unlike generic hunting dogs, the Hao/Hau Fə is uniquely adapted to the terrain and climatic conditions of the Tangkhul region, demonstrating remarkable endurance and loyalty. Hunters often selected and trained these dogs from an early age, ensuring that they developed the necessary skills to track, chase and corner prey effectively. Training methods were passed down orally through generations, emphasising techniques that harmonised human strategy with canine instincts.

Representation in Oral Narratives and Customary Laws:

The Hao/Hau Sāfə is more than just a hunting dog for the Tangkhul Naga community; it is deeply embedded in oral narratives and customary laws, reflecting its cultural and symbolic significance. Folktales and myths portray the breed as a guardian, protector and at times, a being with near-human intelligence. This reverence is further reinforced by traditional laws that recognise the dog's value and ensure its protection.

The Hao/Hau Fə frequently appears in Tangkhul oral traditions, often depicted as an intelligent and loyal companion. One such example is the love story of Shimreishang Zimik and Maitonphy Longleng, where the protagonist, Ashang (Shimreishang Zimik), owns an extraordinary hunting dog named Hungkhama. This dog, characterised by a rare white ring around its neck, was believed to possess exceptional intelligence. The story recounts a significant hunting event where Ashang, after wounding a stag, grew tired and momentarily lost focus. However, Hungkhama continued the chase alongside other hunters and ultimately captured the stag, claiming its head as per traditional hunting customs. This tale not only highlights the dog's hunting prowess but also underscores its role as an autonomous and strategic participant in the hunt. Another legend, the story of Longyao Vashum and Kamringphy Longleng, further

emphasises the symbolic importance of the Hao/Hau Sāfā. Longyao, a man who embarks on a journey to Kazeiram, the land of the dead, to retrieve his deceased fiancée, is accompanied by his loyal hunting dog. Like Hungkhama, this dog also bears the distinctive white ring—a mark associated with intelligence and rarity. Throughout Longyao's perilous journey, his canine companion remains steadfast, reinforcing the deep emotional and spiritual bond between the Tangkhul people and their dogs. In these tales, the Hao/Hau Fā is not merely a pet but a figure of loyalty, wisdom and endurance.

Beyond oral traditions, the significance of the Hao/Hau Fā is also reflected in Tangkhul customary laws. The community has long recognised the value of hunting dogs, treating them with a level of esteem often reserved for prized possessions. A well-trained hunting dog was a status symbol, signifying the owner's prowess and reputation. Customary laws ensured the fair treatment and protection of these dogs. Disputes over ownership were also taken seriously and stealing or harming another person's dog was punishable. Such legal frameworks indicate that the Hao/Hau Fā was not viewed as an ordinary animal but as an integral part of communal and hunting life.

The representation of the Hao/Hau Fā in oral narratives and customary laws reveals its deep-rooted significance in Tangkhul culture. Folktales elevate the breed beyond its practical role, attributing to its intelligence, loyalty and even spiritual qualities. Meanwhile, customary laws reinforce its value by ensuring its protection and recognising its contribution to the community. Through both storytelling and legal traditions, the Hao/Hau Fā continues to be a symbol of Tangkhul identity, embodying their hunting heritage and cultural ethos.

Ecological Intelligence and Indigenous Knowledge Systems:

The Hao/Hau Fā, an indigenous dog breed of the Tangkhul Nagas embodies a form of ecological intelligence deeply embedded in indigenous knowledge systems. More than just a hunting companion, the breed plays a crucial role in traditional practices of environmental stewardship, resource management, and cultural beliefs. Through its ability to track animals, navigate complex terrains and respond to subtle environmental cues, the Hao/Hau Fā demonstrates an intrinsic understanding of the local ecosystem. By working alongside hunters, it contributed to sustainable hunting practices, ensuring that animal populations were not recklessly depleted. This reflects broader Tangkhul strategies of ecological balance, where hunting was regulated by cultural taboos and seasonal restrictions.

Among the Tangkhuls, hunting has never been a practice of indiscriminate killing; rather, it follows an indigenous code of ethics. The Hao/Hau Fā, with its keen instincts and specialised skills, was an integral part of this system. Hunters relied on the dog's acute senses to track game efficiently, minimising unnecessary kills and ensuring that only what was needed was taken. This practice aligns with traditional ecological knowledge, which emphasises sustainability and respect for the environment. Furthermore, Tangkhul hunters recognise that certain times of the year are not suitable for hunting. Breeding seasons, for instance, were observed to allow animal populations to replenish. In this way, the use of the Hao/Hau Fā was not simply for human advantage but was part of a larger framework of resource management. The breed's role in hunting, therefore, extends beyond utility—it is an agent within a deeply rooted system of environmental responsibility.

The training and use of the Hao/Hau Fā align with indigenous epistemologies that view animals as sentient beings with knowledge to share. In Tangkhul society, the relationship between hunter and dog was not merely one of dominance and control; it was based on mutual respect and cooperation. The dog was considered a partner in the hunt, not just a tool. Such indigenous perspectives challenge Western categorisations of animals as passive objects of human use. Instead, they acknowledge the Hao/Hau Fā as

an active participant in environmental stewardship. This view is reflected in the training of the breed, where young puppies learn from older, experienced dogs through observation and participation. Knowledge transmission, therefore, happens in ways that parallel human cultural learning, further reinforcing the idea that the Hao/Hau Fą possesses intelligence that is recognised and valued within Tangkhul traditions.

Beyond hunting, the Hao/Hau Fą is deeply embedded in Tangkhul spiritual beliefs. The dog is thought to possess greater perception than humans, including the ability to see ghosts and malevolent spirits. In many households, the Hao/Hau Fą stands guard at the doorway, not only to protect its owner from wild animals and enemies but also to ward off supernatural threats. This belief reinforces the special status of the breed, elevating it beyond a mere working dog to a guardian of both the physical and spiritual well-being of its human companions. This protective aspect is further reflected in the breed's role within the community. Stories and oral traditions speak of the Hao/Hau Fą's loyalty, courage and ability to sense danger before humans do. Such qualities have made it an essential part of Tangkhul households, even beyond its hunting abilities.

The Hao/Hau Fą is more than a hunting dog—it is a bearer of indigenous ecological knowledge, a guardian and a key player in Tangkhul traditions of sustainability and survival. Its role in hunting, protection and spiritual belief systems underscores the deep interconnection between humans, animals and the environment within Tangkhul culture. By understanding and preserving the significance of the Hao/Hau Fą, we gain insight into indigenous knowledge systems that emphasise ecological balance, respect for non-human life and the sustainable management of natural resources. In an era of environmental crises, such traditional wisdom holds valuable lessons for contemporary discussions on conservation and coexistence.

Current Challenges in Preserving the Hao/Hau Fą:

The Tangkhul community has gradually become more aware of the need to preserve the Hao/Hau Fą breed. However, despite increasing interest, there remains a lack of government initiatives to support its conservation and promotion. The absence of state-sponsored breeding and training centers poses a major challenge. While Phungcham Village in Ukhrul North has taken significant steps to protect the breed, funding constraints hinder large-scale conservation efforts. Another critical issue is the high mortality rate among puppies, particularly during autumn and winter, which are peak breeding seasons. Diseases such as distemper and cold-induced diarrhea are common, leading to high death rates. Additionally, while encouraging villagers to rear Hao/Hau Fą in their households has helped sustain the breed, it has also created new challenges. Not all families can afford to provide adequate food, leading to malnutrition. Moreover, the increasing number of Hao/Hau Fą dogs has led to cases of pack behaviour, resulting in attacks on domesticated animals.

The Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Conservation Debates:

Indigenous knowledge plays a crucial role in conserving and preserving the Hao/Hau Fą. Rooted in generations of oral traditions and lived experiences, this knowledge system informs the breeding, training and overall care of these dogs. The Tangkhul community has long relied on its traditional wisdom to maintain the breed's unique characteristics, ensuring that it remains well-adapted to the local environment and continues to serve its cultural and functional roles. However, as conservation debates gain momentum, the challenge lies in integrating indigenous knowledge with modern scientific approaches to achieve a sustainable and holistic conservation strategy.

The breeding and rearing of the Hao/Hau Fą are deeply embedded in Tangkhul indigenous knowledge. The selection of mating pairs is not arbitrary but guided by ancestral wisdom, which considers factors

such as lineage, temperament and physical traits. This careful selection process ensures that desirable attributes, such as hunting skills, loyalty and adaptability, are passed down to future generations. From birth to weaning, traditional practices shape the growth of puppies. For instance, paring the tails of both male and female puppies and paring the ears of male dogs is a long-standing custom. These practices are believed to enhance the breed's agility, confidence and attentiveness—traits that are essential for Hao/Hau Fą. While these customs have been followed for generations, conservation discussions today call for a critical evaluation of their impact on the well-being of the breed.

Although indigenous knowledge has effectively maintained the Hao/Hau Fą for centuries, integrating modern veterinary science can significantly improve the breed's health and longevity. Veterinary care can help prevent and treat diseases, ensuring that the dogs grow stronger and healthier. Additionally, a scientific approach to breeding, including genetic assessments, can help prevent hereditary health issues and enhance the breed's resilience. While traditional methods emphasise behavioural traits and adaptability, modern techniques offer insights into nutrition, disease prevention and overall well-being. For example, while indigenous knowledge values natural foraging and locally available food, veterinary science can provide balanced diets that improve the dogs' physical and cognitive development. A collaborative approach that respects traditional practices while incorporating scientific advancements would ensure the sustainable conservation of the breed.

The conservation of the Hao/Hau Fą should not be seen as a conflict between indigenous and scientific knowledge but rather as an opportunity for collaboration. While traditional practices ensure the breed retains its cultural significance and functional abilities, scientific methods can enhance its health and genetic diversity. The Tangkhul community's deep-rooted understanding of the breed's behaviour, social structure and role in the local ecosystem remains invaluable in conservation efforts. A sustainable approach would involve engaging local communities, researchers and veterinarians in a dialogue that respects and incorporates indigenous knowledge. By documenting oral traditions, conducting field studies and applying scientific research, a more holistic conservation strategy can be developed. Furthermore, initiatives such as awareness programs and breeding guidelines can help preserve the Hao/Hau Fą while adapting to changing environmental and societal conditions.

Conclusion

Phungcham Village has pioneered efforts to sustain the Hao/Hau Fą dog breed by implementing strict preservation measures. The village prohibits the rearing of any other dog breeds within its jurisdiction to maintain the purity of the Hao/Hau Fą bloodline. To promote awareness, the village hosts the Hao/Hau Fą Phanit (Hao/Hau Fą festival) annually on December 8. The Phungcham Haořą Lovers Association, supported by the village authorities, plays a crucial role in these conservation efforts. This initiative has successfully increased the Hao/Hau Fą population and has even attracted tourism, bringing economic benefits to the village. However, establishing a dedicated breeding and training center remains an urgent need. A separate veterinary center for Hao/Hau Fą puppies would help address the high mortality rate and improve breeding conditions. While community-led efforts have been commendable, a well-structured breeding and training facility, incorporating both indigenous and modern techniques, would ensure the long-term survival of this culturally significant breed.

For the Tangkhul Naga, hunting has traditionally been more than just a means of procuring food—it has served as a measure of skill, courage and prestige. However, with increasing awareness of environmental conservation, ethical considerations have been incorporated into hunting practices. Seasonal restrictions

on hunting reflect a conscious effort to safeguard biodiversity while upholding cultural traditions. These regulations help maintain ecological balance by allowing wildlife populations to replenish naturally. The role of the Hao/Hau Fā in hunting has also evolved in response to conservation concerns. Instead of being used primarily for hunting, these indigenous dogs are now valued for their ability to manage wildlife movement in ways that protect crops and forests from excessive damage. By preserving the Hao/Hau Fā and adapting traditional hunting methods to align with ecological principles, the Tangkhul community showcases a dynamic approach that integrates indigenous wisdom with modern environmental awareness. This balance ensures the continuity of cultural heritage while promoting sustainable interactions with nature.

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