AN ETHNOARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE MEGALITHS AT WILLONG KHULLEN, MANIPUR

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DECLARATION

I, Oinam Premchand Singh, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "An **Ethnoarchaeological Study of the Megaliths at Willong Khullen, Manipur**" submitted by me for the award of the degree of the Master of Philosophy is my original work and it has not been submitted so far, in part or in full, for any other degree of this university or in any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

We hereby recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Dedicated

To

My Beloved Uncle

Late Dr. Oinam Gyaneshwor Singh

(1st April 1974- 30th November 2005)

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(OINAM PREMCHAND SINGH)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASI	Archaeological Survey of India
A.D.	Anno Domini
B.C.	Before Christ
C.E.	Common Era
DEM	Digital Elevation Module
GIS	Geographical Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
Ibid	Ibidem
MASL	Meter Above the Sea Level

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

For centuries, megaliths around the world have been a sight of wonder and admiration to generations of people including laymen and archaeologists. To an archaeologist, megaliths are interesting for quite a number of reasons: firstly, megaliths are considered as products of the early complex societies; secondly, their wide variability and temporality on the world's landscape; thirdly, from the standpoint of their large sizes, construction of these stone monuments seems to have required huge scale of labour mobilisation and resource expenditures. This means megaliths are manifestations of collective endeavours and this could have needed organisational structures to generate the necessary social cohesion for collective action in the early societies.

Archaeologists have long studied, interpreted, and attributed various reasons for the construction of megaliths both in the 'historic' and 'prehistoric' periods to socio-political functions of the societies. Their interpretations and conclusions are largely drawn from the analysis of material remains collected either through field surveys or excavations. However, such interpretations were absolutely based on the analysis of "the material remains" therefore, it has its own limitations, especially when it comes to addressing some of the most arduous yet pertinent questions related to the nature of early societies, social process, complexities of societies, and construction processes of stone monuments. In view of these limitations, the study here argues that archaeological studies need to be augmented with ethnographic studies. This is paramount in the context of cases where construction of megaliths still continues to be a living social practice. Therefore, a multidisciplinary approach that could draw on existing knowledge from both the disciplines of archaeology and ethnography, in turn, could facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the practice of erecting megaliths. Unfortunately, the practice of erection of stone monuments is now becoming a fast-fading tradition in many societies in Northeast India; so it is indeed an appropriate time to investigate the subject matter from

a fresh problem-oriented approach that could help address the lacuna of previous studies before the practice dies out completely.

Speaking about the prevalent practice of megaliths erection in the whole of Indian subcontinent, Manipur is one among the few Indian states where the erection of megaliths still constitutes a living tradition among some of the groups of people (Devi 2017: 227). Apart from the presence of the living tradition of megaliths in the state, several other megaliths sites have also long been reported by scholars, following the first-ever report of the presence of megaliths by the colonial administrator cum ethnographer, T.C. Hodson (1911: 186). However, it is quite discouraging to observe that the megaliths have not been properly documented or widely studied, leaving aside archaeological excavations at the megaliths sites in the state. This poor state of archaeological research is further evident from the fact that not even a single megaliths site has been scientifically dated to establish a proper cultural sequence. This is a sharp contrast to the wide and intensive nature of research works that have been made at megaliths sites in Southern India. Though very few notable studies were carried out in the state in recent years, the limited nature of studies which have confined only to the short and simplistic description of megaliths in terms of their function and morphology has limited any larger understanding of the history of the people who had built them. On top of that, these studies are also largely incapable of drawing any major understanding of the form of early social organisation or social structure of megaliths societies in the state. So, the lack of problem-oriented nature of the studies on megaliths sites of the state have left us with more perplexing questions than answers: whether the early societies that had produced megaliths were hierarchical or egalitarian in nature; what are the cultural sequences or chronologies of the megaliths sites? Despite the rich scope and huge prospect for future researches, studies so far have for all the myriad reasons been very meager and poorly considered by the scholars who are involved in this field of study. Therefore, several prominent megaliths sites in Manipur, which in the word of L.W. Shakespear (1914: 89) – 'Stonehenge', are still unknown in the larger academic discussion of megaliths in India.

Acknowledging the need for a fresh problem-oriented study of the megaliths sites in Manipur, this dissertation entitled *An Ethnoarchaeological Study of the Megaliths at*

Willong Khullen, Manipur makes the initial attempt to pursue a problem-oriented case study. The study area of the village of Willong Khullen was chosen in the context of it being one of the most prominent and at the same time being least studied megaliths site. The study expects to gain insights into the form of the early social structure of megaliths society through the research design of archaeology and ethnography which is also defined in the latter part of this dissertation. The data and outcome of this dissertation are largely based on fresh archaeological and ethnographic field survey conducted specifically in view of this dissertation in the month of September 2017.

It is important to note in the introductory part of this dissertation that the use of the common term 'megaliths' and other related terminologies, viz. 'menhir', 'cairns', 'stone circle', 'avenue', and others, is in view of the larger sense of the study. It is necessary also to forewarn that it does not try to incorporate or agree with the contentious notion of homogeneity or similarity of stone monuments which are found in various parts of the world, where these terms are most preferably and widely used by scholars. Acknowledging the problem and sensitivity of the usage of the common terminology among few sections of the scholars who are involved in this field of study, other widely used terms, viz. 'stone structure' and 'stone monument' are also synonymously and interchangeably used throughout this dissertation. As an introductory chapter of this dissertation, it lays the groundwork for the course and orientation of the study by detailing the study area, aim and objectives, and methodology. In addition, it also delineates the overall structure of the dissertation.

1.2 THE STUDY AREA

The study area of the village of Willong Khullen is located in the Mao-Maram tehsil of Senapati district, Manipur. There are several befitting reasons for choosing this particular village as the case study area of this dissertation. Firstly, it is one of the oldest villages which is inhabited by Maram people where many early traditions are still continued by the people. The stone monuments of this village are also among the first to be reported and documented in the state of Manipur by the early colonial officer cum ethnographers (Hodson 1911; Shakespear 1914; Hutton 1929). The availability of these early

ethnographic records about the erection of stone monuments in this village was a significant reason for choosing it as a study area of this dissertation as it can at times prove to be really useful when attempts are made to reconstruct the early past and social structures of the people. Secondly, the lack of problem-oriented study of megaliths in this village, despite having been early informed of the presence of innumerable forms and massive sizes of megaliths – 'Stonehenge,' was another reason for choosing this site. Thirdly, the geographical location of the village was also a reason for choosing this site. The site is located in one of the 'remotest' hilly corners of the state. Access to this site has always been very difficult because hilly terrains have acted as an insurmountable barrier to the road that reaches this village. Therefore, in the absence of easy access to this village, it was expected that there would be least chances of human interferences and more likelihood of getting preserved the stone monuments in their original position, in comparison to other sites of the state where recent development activities have resulted to the random destructions of megalith sites. Fourthly, the availability of clusters of different forms of megaliths within the small expanse of the village area of about fourteen hectares in size was another reason for choosing this site. As the area of the village is small, there was enough opportunity to carry out a smooth cost effective archaeological fieldwork by taking into account the limited time schedule and monetary constraint in view of M. Phil course. Lastly, the availability of continued practice of construction of megaliths in this village was also another significant reason for choosing this village as the study area. It was expected that the availability of the living tradition of the construction of megaliths would be best suited for conducting ethnographic studies in the village in view of understanding several early social processes that had led to the production of stone monuments.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this dissertation is to understand the tradition of megaliths construction by the inhabitants of Willong Khullen village in the recent past. Since this study is a preliminary inquiry, it follows the footsteps of the recent studies of megaliths carried out by Andrew M. Bauer (2015) in the Tungabhadra River Basin in central Karnataka in India and also of Ron Lynn Adams (2007) in his study of the megaliths of Sumba in

Indonesia. In doing so, this study brings to light that there are still various neglected aspects in this field of study, such as, technological development and consequent methodological advancement, i.e. spatial analysis of megaliths through Geographical Information System (GIS) maps, recording of traditional methods of construction of megaliths, examination of labour mobilisation, and resource expenditure in the construction of megaliths. Simple yet truly significant questions of why, how, and who had built the megaliths at this particular village is the focus of this study. Attempt to answer these questions could shed some light towards an understanding of the nature of social structure existed earlier and a relative chronology of the beginning of megaliths construction in this village. Therefore, the following are the five main objectives of this study:

i) Proper documentation of different forms of megaliths and its ancestral structures present in the village.

ii) To create proper sitemaps (GIS maps) which would show the location of different forms of megaliths and ancestral structures in the village to determine the spatial relationship and variability of the sizes of megaliths on the landscape.

iii) To record the traditional methods of the erection of megaliths in the village, viz. rituals, expenditure of resources, and labour mobilisation, quarrying, and hauling of the stone monuments, to determine the social context of the creation of the megaliths.

iv) To determine whether only a few groups of the people erected megaliths or everyone could erect megaliths. What were the social privileges and benefits accrued to those people who had erected megaliths?

v) To establish a relative chronology or the date of the start of construction of megaliths in the village.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The study is set upon a combination of two research strategies: an archaeological research design and an ethnographic research design. The data provided in chapter III of this study was collected via cost-effective systematic intensive archaeological survey method by relying on latest survey tools and equipment to ensure a detailed documentation of the field findings and to gather fresh quantifiable database from the study area. The generated database includes a detailed account of the measurements of megaliths, Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates, description of ancestral structures, and landscape features. Consequently, the generated data from the field survey are properly analysed by using the Google Earth image, Geographical Information System (GIS) maps, and statistical analysis. In the case of chapter IV, a general ethnographic research design is employed. In order to collect ethnographic information, the local inhabitants of the area were interviewed. Interviews were taken with a set of prepared questions on larger themes such as the general ethnographic profile of the present village, history of the settlement, traditional socio-political structures, traditional process of construction of stone monuments, and details of the continued practices of stone erection in the village. Field observations made during the survey constitute a vital part of this research design. The two discrete research methodologies employed in this current work are discussed in detail in each of the two chapters.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is divided into five chapters, including the introduction and conclusion chapters. Chapter I sets the framework for this research work. It succinctly introduces and lays down the problems of the research and its general orientation. It introduces the study area and highlights the befitting reasons for selecting the particular village of Willong Khullen as the study area for this dissertation. It also presents the research methodology employed in this dissertation. It also briefly delineates the aim, objectives, and structure of this dissertation.

Chapter II is titled ‘Historiography’ and it offers comprehensive, current historiographical trends employed by scholars in the study of megaliths. The rationale

behind treating historiography as a separate chapter in this dissertation is to incorporate and locate the study within the ambit of the present trends of studies. In this backdrop, some of the important key concepts, themes, and approaches employed very recently by the scholars in megaliths studies in India and around the world at large are discussed in this chapter. The chapter starts with a formal discussion on what constitutes megaliths. It then discusses the nuances of usage of the term "megalith" as put forth by some section of archaeologists and discusses why majority of the scholars have preferably continued to use this term. It then proceeds to address some of the general themes on which scholars around the world have recently engaged, discussed, and interpreted megaliths, viz. astronomy, socio-political, and ideology. The next section of the chapter offers an overview of megaliths studies in India and traces the history of studies, particularly in the context of Southern India. In doing so, various approaches which have been adopted in Southern India by scholars are succinctly discussed. It then discusses megaliths studies in Northeast India starting from the early period of studies and explains why some of the previous approaches that have been adopted by the scholars have limitations. The next section of the chapter particularly discusses the history of the archaeological research in the state of Manipur and highlights the potential and scope of the archaeological research in the state not only on the studies of megaliths but also on the other neglected topics, viz. Paleolithic, Hoabinhian, and Neolithic. This chapter further examines the trends of previous megaliths studies in the state of Manipur. It also discusses briefly all of the previous researches in the study area of this dissertation - Willong Khullen village and highlights the lack of detail studies and the need for conducting a fresh problem-oriented research at this site.

Chapter III is titled 'Archaeological Survey of the Megaliths at Willong Khullen Village', and it presents an analysis of archaeological survey findings from the study area of Willong Khullen village. The chapter begins with an introduction of the advantages of employing GIS as a research tool in archaeological studies and highlights the specific objectives of the chapter. The next section of the chapter discusses in detail the geographic profile of the study area and contextualise it on the larger map of Manipur. The next section then provides the detail of the archaeological fieldwork and survey methods employed while undertaking the survey in the study area. The next section of

this chapter provides the documentation of field findings, including the detailed documentation of thirty-nine megaliths clusters and ancestral structures. The documentation includes the details of all new thirty-six megaliths clusters which have never been documented by the previous scholars. The documentation section consists of field observation, details measurement of megaliths, GPS coordinates, and description of ancestral structures present in the village. In the following section, the field findings are contextualised on the GIS maps to ensure proper spatial analysis on sitemaps. The spatial analysis of different forms of megaliths and sizes on the GIS maps shows that there is distinctive variability in the distribution pattern and forms of megaliths on the landscape. For instance, stone monuments that would require a considerable amount of manpower in the construction process and those that would require lesser manpower are located at distinctive location and elevation point on the landscape. In other words, bigger, and larger forms of megaliths are always located near to the hill slope on the eastern side of the village, whereas smaller size megaliths that would require lesser labour participants are located in the settlement area, far away from the eastern hill. Further, based on the distribution pattern of megaliths and other ancestral structures on the landscape, it is argued that the earliest pattern of settlement at the village would only be on the hilltop as most of the important material traces are found only on the hilltop. In the absence of proper scientific technique or dating to assign an absolute date for the start of the megaliths practices in this village, a new research strategy is developed in this study. The new research strategy mainly examines the architectural design and colour setting of the megaliths forms. Through this research design, it is argued that menhirs which are more roughly dressed and which bear erosive marks on the stone surfaces predated the other forms of megaliths. Moreover, it is also argued in this chapter that the start of the megaliths construction that requires the involvement of huge manpower signifies some sort of emergence of new forms of labour mobilisation, technological development, and increase in population in the village. This inference implies that there was some form of complex social organisation in the village that could command the allegiance of labour participants in the construction process of megaliths.

Chapter IV is titled, ‘Ethnographic Study at Willong Khullen Village’ and it is based entirely on the ethnographic study undertaken at the village. The chapter introduces the

importance of the research design of ethnography as a useful tool in the discipline of archaeology and provides a comprehensive account of the ethnographic profile of the village, viz. people, demography, economy, religion, festivals, and others. It then details the traditional socio-political structure of the village i.e. the village council as the chief administrative structure of the society. It also traces in details the early history of settlement in the village based on ethnographic information collected from the local informants. It then classifies stone monuments which are found in the village on the basis of functional categories into four folds, viz. commemorative, burial, religious, and resting stones, and records the traditional methods of construction of the stone monuments, viz. rituals, quarrying, dragging, labour mobilisation, and feasting. Furthermore, it also examines the continued practice of construction of stone monuments in the village. Based on the analysis of ethnographic information, it is shown that the majority of forms of megaliths in the village have been related to individual or family gains rather than for the benefits of society. The chapter contends that only those people who had erected megaliths gained upper status in the society is indicative of the prevalence of a certain form of inequalities among people in the society in terms of wealth and power. Moreover, ethnographic information also suggests that the construction of menhirs were much earlier and were associated with iron objects. Further, ethnographic information suggests that the start of the megaliths construction in the village can be dated relatively back to 1600 -1700 C.E.

Chapter V is the concluding chapter of this dissertation. This chapter recapitulates the discussions made in all the preceding chapters and contends that the form of the early social organisation that had produced megaliths at the village was organised as village council based society. It also argues that since there had been a difference of status among the people who had erected stones and who had not, the nature of the early society cannot truly be characterised as an egalitarian society. It also contends that the early pattern of settlement at the village was started on the hilltop. It also places the start of the megaliths construction in the village relatively to 1600-1700 C.E.

CHAPTER II

HISTORIOGRAPHY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the current historiographical trends employed by scholars in the study of megaliths. This would enable the dissertation to incorporate the latest advancement made till now in this field of study. Moreover, it would facilitate a more scientifically rigorous method to unravel the megaliths in Willong Khullen village. Given this, the chapter, however, would not pursue an exhaustive reference of all the available literature and only deal with the recent literature of significance in a critical sense. The parsimony in dealing with the existing literature is purely done due to the limited time frame under which the study has to be completed.

Firstly, the chapter provides a formal introduction of what constitutes 'megaliths', and attempts to shed some light on the contentious issues with regard to usage of the term amongst the current generation of scholars. It further discusses some of the key themes on how scholars in the field have engaged and analysed megaliths around the world. In the next section, it attempts to trace the history of studies of megaliths in India, especially in view of the major approaches which have so far been employed by scholars. In order to ascertain the soundness of the approach thus employed in the current study, the chapter attempts to highlight some of the important works undertaken especially on megaliths in Northeast India and particularly in the state of Manipur. The chapter contends that there is a need for a problem-oriented archaeological research in this region. Furthermore, the chapter also traces the history of archaeological research in the state and indicates that there exists a huge scope for future archaeological studies not only of megaliths but also of related themes of archaeology, viz. Palaeolithic, Hoabinhian, and Neolithic. Finally, the chapter examines the research works already undertaken at Willong Khullen village and thereby identifies the limitations and suggests for approaching the subject matter from a problem-oriented perspective.

2.2 MEGALITHS

The term '*megaliths*' is derived from two Greek words - '*mega*' meaning big, and '*lithos*' meaning stone. Therefore, literally, the term denotes any 'large stone structures' (Childe 1948: 5). In archaeology, the term is used in a more restricted sense, i.e. stone monuments built on burial sites by using roughly dressed big natural stones. The used of the term is also extended to stone structures constructed both for the memorial as well as religious purposes. On top of this, small stone structures which do not exactly fit into the general definition of the term megaliths i.e. large stone structures, and graves that do not have any 'lithic appendage' are also considered as megaliths, if they have similar traits or findings as in others burial sites which scholars have already considered as megaliths (Devi 2011: 2). In addition, the size of the stone is not the only criterion that determines a stone structure to be classified as megaliths, but more importantly, the function for which they were erected is also taken into account. One reason for this is that there is a seeming correlation between the sizes of the stone monuments and its purported function. Moreover, the use of stones or woods in the construction of megaliths was also largely influenced by the availability of the materials and by the belief of people (Khongreiwo 2014: 296).

Megaliths are found in different parts of the world; in Asia, Africa, America, Australia, and Europe. Because of their widespread presence on the world's landscape, it is claimed by scholars as a 'world phenomenon' (Moorti 2008: 746). It is also one of the most widely studied topics in the field of archaeology. Although it is an extensively studied topic in archaeology, several queries such as - origin, authorship, chronology, and various aspects of social organisation remains contentious issues among scholars till today. This has resulted into seemingly lack of common consensus among the scholars, so much so that, archaeologists have considered megaliths as one of the 'greatest enigmas' of all the archaeological remains of past civilisation (Devi 2011: 2).

2.3 THE TERMINOLOGY: 'MEGALITHS'

There is a considerable disagreement amongst scholars as to when the term 'megaliths' came to be widely used. According to Daniel, the term 'megaliths' came to be used in the

archaeological study for defining a specific class of early stone structures in Europe, more precisely from the 1940s onwards (Daniel 1958: 14). In the initial phase of studies, the use of the term was limited to the stone structures that were discovered in the Western and Northern Europe. But gradually the application of the term was extended to several large stone structures which were found in other parts of the world (Childe 1848: 5). But few scholars, namely, James Fergusson (1872), T. Eric Peet (1912), and others, had refused to use this term in their monumental works. Instead of this term, these groups of scholars had opted for more neutral terms such as 'stone monuments' and 'stone structures' in their work. However, the discoveries of different forms of stone monuments in various parts of the world from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards paved the way and renewed the issue of usage of a common term. Given this, some section of scholars has also argued that the use of a common term is too restrictive and simplistic. They stressed that it only expresses the singularity of a culture that fails to capture the existence of considerable varieties of stone structures in different parts of the world (Whittle 2002: 192).

In order to resolve the issue of the prudence of usage of a common term, scholars engaging in this field of study have recently proposed several neutral terms, viz. 'neo megaliths', 'mounds', 'earthen mound', 'monuments' or 'monumental architecture' (Midgley 2008: 24). In the Indian context, recent studies in South India have suggested for a more neutral and less querulous term such as 'Iron age', instead of the earlier common term, viz. 'megalithic culture' (Morrison *et al.* 2010: 240; Sudyka 2011: 360). As the use of the term remains a contentious issue, some scholars have started to use less problematic terms like 'stone monuments' and stone structures' as synonymous and interchangeable terms. Though the use of the term remains as an issue, a large number of scholars in the world have preferably continued to use 'megaliths' for connoting a specific class of stone structures in their studies. In this regard, archaeologists R. Mohanty and V. Selvakumar (2002: 314) argued that 'megaliths' as a term has become well-established among the archaeologists.

2.4 STUDIES ON MEGALITHS: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Megalith is one of the most widely studied topics in the discipline of archaeology. Therefore, it has generated in time a huge corpus of literature. But, if one examines very closely, it becomes quite apparent that the studies especially the recent ones have focused on a few important themes only. This section would therefore only provide a summary of some of the key themes on which scholars have very recently engaged with regard to studies on megaliths all around the world. Some of the key themes include - astronomy, socio-function, and ideology.

2.4.1 ASTRONOMY

One of the popular themes on which scholars have discussed on megaliths in the recent year is to understand the astronomical knowledge of the early farming societies. This theme has recently gained popular attraction among large sections of scholars across the world. The main conclusions of these studies are drawn from scientific methods of analysis, i.e. recording the alignment, orientation, and layout pattern of the megaliths in relation to the existing knowledge on the cosmology of the universe. One of the early proponents of this approach is Alexander Thom (1966: 121-128) who contended that megaliths represented the astronomical knowledge of the early farming societies. According to him, specific location, positioning, and plan of megaliths on the earth's surface especially at the megaliths sites of Moel Ty Ulcha, Woodhenge, Druid circle (Penmaenmawr) in the United Kingdom were erected in accordance to the position of celestial bodies such as stars, moon, and sun at different seasons of the years. He contended that megaliths were built specifically to predict the solar eclipse and also to determine the general position of the earth by people of the early farming societies. He pointed out that during 'megalithic time' there were two methods employed by the people to understand the passage of time. The first methods relied on observation of the rising and setting of the sun or the stars over the meridian. The second method was through observation of the sun's shadow made by the stone monuments (great slabs) on the earth's surface.

Similarly, Euan W. MacKie (1997: 356-358) studied the great chamber tomb of Maeshowe located in the northernmost part of Scotland and came to the conclusion that the architectural pattern of the chamber tomb which exhibited a certain kind of illumination during the time of sunset was in all likelihood used to understand calendrically important events of years by the early farming societies. Far from the European context, N. Kameswara Rao and Priya Thakur (2010: 81) also stated that the non-sepulchral stone monuments at the megaliths site of Vibhuthihalli in Karnataka (India) were imbued with astronomical knowledge of the past people. Their studies have shown that the rows of stones at this site which are pointing exactly in the direction of sunrise and sunset on calendrically important dates, like solstices exemplifies the astronomical knowledge of past societies and were likely to be used by early farming societies of Vibhuthihalli to understand the passage of the seasons and years.

2.4.2 SOCIO-FUNCTION

The construction of megaliths has been widely contended by a large number of scholars as an indication of the emergence of complexities within the earliest farming societies. Scholars are of the opinion that megaliths were built by the upper elite groups of society as the markers of territoriality to assert their claim and control over land and natural resources. In this regard, Andrew Fleming (1973: 189) stated that 'tombs' (megaliths) were specific centers for undertaking rituals by the early farming communities. However, the functions of the tombs were not limited only for burial purposes. He argued that tombs were used by living individuals to enhance or increase their status in the society. However, he was not certain whether tombs were actually used as markers of territoriality by the early societies. Nonetheless, he believed that tombs might have been used as a marker of territoriality by early farming communities to demarcate the extent of the territoriality and control of land from the claims of the neighbouring farming communities.

In 1973, 1976, and 1983 Collin Renfrew in his study of the early Neolithic society of England opined that construction of megaliths is an important indication of the emergence of 'chiefdom society'. He opined that megaliths represent the degree of social

cohesion within the early farming societies. It also served as a marker of territoriality of the early farming societies. He surmised that the population pressure in the Atlantic/North Seaboard during the end of the Neolithic period had necessitated the construction of stone monuments to symbolise their control of land and resources. In a similar line, Rober Chapman in 1981 also argued that megaliths were not only used as a territorial marker by the early farming societies, but also as an indicator of the emergence of 'kinship-based corporate group' driven by the motive to control over important resources of the societies (Renfrew cited in Adams 2007: 4-18).

2.4.3 IDEOLOGY

Several recent studies have underscored the point that megaliths were markers of ideology and belief system of the early farming societies. Some group of scholars underlined that changes that had occurred within the societies of the early Neolithic period, especially in the context of Europe, were the main reasons for the beginning of construction of megaliths. Andrew Sherratt (1990: 257) in his study, focussed on the transition that occurred in the farming societies in the Mesolithic to the Neolithic period in Europe. He argued that construction of megaliths was triggered by the transition of the farming society into more complex societies. In fact, construction of megaliths became an important tool for shaping people's ideology and social organisation. Richard Bradley (1998: 34-66) also contended that megaliths of the Mesolithic and Neolithic period of Europe represent the gradual development of new ideas, technological development, and evolution of a new belief system among the people with the surrounding natural world. He stressed that stone monuments were built by people to establish a sense of time on the landscape.

Christopher Tilly (2004: 83-84) in his *Materiality of Stone: Exploration in Landscape Phenomenology* discussed the symbolic meanings behind the erection of menhirs particularly at the coastal areas of Finistere (Britain). He observed that the sea water level had constantly changed in the past and menhirs might have acted as a means of stabilising the land against future encroachment by sea water. He pointed out the existence of the folklore associated with Men-Marz menhir in Haut Leon which was

believed to be magically set up by the sister of St. Pol. The folklore says that after the erection of the stone, the sea became quiet and obedient and stopped any further encroachment on the land.

On a similar note, Magdalena Midgley (2008: 193-200) in her *The Megaliths of Northern Europe* examined the megaliths of the Neolithic period in Europe and concluded that construction of megaliths was mainly due to the development of new ideologies and technological skills among the early farming societies. She asserted that random, cluster, disperse, and linear arrangement of megaliths in the landscape of northern Europe was intended to convey a whole range of expression; multiple ideological and symbolic meanings of the early farming societies. Therefore, megaliths represented the physical and conceptual expression of the early northern European Neolithic farmers.

2.5 STUDIES ON MEGALITHS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

The Indian subcontinent is well known for its rich megaliths remains. Till today, the tradition of stone erection is practice by some groups of people in the subcontinent. Megaliths remains are found in various parts of the country; throughout from north to south and east to west. But the maximum concentration of megaliths sites in India is found in the Southern Indian states of Andra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharastra, and Tamil Nadu. According to an estimation carried out by Subhinoy Gangopadhyay (2002: 73), there are about 1,120 megaliths sites in Southern India alone, out of the total figure of 1,400 megaliths sites in India. Megaliths sites in India also belong to the different time period and cultural sequence. It is contended by scholars that megaliths which are found in Southern India belong to the early 'iron age period.' However, the megaliths which are found in the north and northwestern parts of India predated the megaliths in South India. Interestingly, the tradition of construction of megaliths in Northeast India and among the Gond tribes of the Odisha in central India are still living traditions as people continue to construct megaliths till today.

Scholars have generally divided megaliths of South India on the basis of their structural design into several categories, viz. menhirs, dolmen, cist burials, stone alignment, urn, sarcophagus burials, cairn, flat stones, stone circle, topikal, kudai-kal, and rock-cut

burials chambers (Moorti 2008: 746). Whereas megaliths which are found in Northeast India are generally divided into different categories mainly on the basis of the functions, viz. memorial or commemorative, religious stone structures, and so on (see Devi 2011: 39-50; Marak 2012: 49-50). Scholars are also of the opinion that megaliths which are found in Northeast India and South India are distinctively different. Apart from the structural or functional differences, these two regions have also come to the attention of scholars in a separate time. In Southern India, studies on megaliths were started in the early half of the 19th century, whereas in Northeast India it was started from the early decades of the 20th century. Like in other parts of the world, studies on megaliths in India has exhibited several anomalies and there is an evident lack of consensus as to how the study should be approached. Therefore, several competing approaches have been adopted by scholars since the initial period of the studies. This is done to better interpret and understand them. It is noteworthy to mention that the approaches or trends of studies adopted in the studies on megaliths in India have been largely influenced by the theoretical frameworks or themes already laid out in the studies on megaliths in Europe. Having said this, the section below would attempt to identify the salient features of approaches that have been witnessed particularly in the studies on megaliths in Southern India. In the following section, it would also deal in length with the trends of studies on megaliths in Northeast India. It is noteworthy to mention here that the studies on megaliths in Northeast India have its own unique challenges. Firstly, partly because the region has not been extensively engaged in many aspects of academic studies that deals with history, anthropology, ethnography, and others. Secondly, the problem of accessibility remains a considerable hurdle in the region.

2.5.1 DIFFUSIONIST APPROACH

India has a very long unique history of megaliths studies. Since the first discovery and excavation of megaliths site in 1823 by J. Babington (1923) at Bangala Motto Parambar in Malabar Coast in Kerala, widespread research has been carried out in several parts of Southern India. This initial discovery somehow attracted the interest of ‘antiquarian’, colonial officials, and even interest of the common people to search for megaliths sites in South India. After this initial discovery, several other megaliths sites were subsequently

explored and excavated in South India. In this regard, mention can be made about the notable early discoveries of megaliths sites in Southern India by Taylor (1841, 1851), Foote (1866), Cunningham (1871), and others. In the initial stage of research, studies were mainly dominated by the colonial officials, and efforts of the few individuals in their quest for early valuable material remains or treasures from the megaliths burials. Unfortunately, random destruction of several megaliths sites in South India did occur because of lack of systematic studies or lopsided documentation of the excavated sites (Wheeler 1948: 181). Albeit largely characterised by unsystematic individual effort in the initial period of the research, an approach or trend was gradually emerged after the 1860s. 'Antiquarians' or the colonial officials who had carried out exploratory work at the megaliths sites in South India started several comparative studies of Indian megaliths with those of the megaliths, found in Europe and central Asia. Some scholars who were conscious of megaliths forms of Europe and central Asia did raise the pertinent question on the origin of this tradition in India and in various parts of the world (see Taylor 1865).

The real boost to the study on megaliths took place after the establishment of Archaeological Survey of India (hereafter, ASI) in 1872. Subsequently, after the establishment of ASI, several other archaeology departments were soon started to function in many Indian states. All these developments led to widespread exploration and excavation works throughout in India. Interestingly, all these events also influenced the approach to the study of megaliths. Unlike the initial phase, a more systematic documentation and preservation efforts were initiated through the efforts and guidance of ASI. Though several studies were carried out in the initial phase, the majority of these studies primarily sought to understand Indian megaliths through the lens of a single origin of culture as employed widely by scholars who studied European megaliths. To be more precise, this approach in the studies of megaliths is generally termed as 'diffusionist' by scholars. The main focus of this approach is focused on the identification and classification of distinctive forms of megaliths. In other words, the criterion employed in this approach laid primary emphasis on the identification of the similarities of forms of megaliths discovered in various parts of India in terms of morphology, typology, and structure. This approach on the studies of megaliths attempted to largely support the claim and theory of migration of people from Europe to several parts of the

world purely on the basis of the availability of the structural similarities of the megaliths (see Hunt 1916; Childe 1948: 5-13). Regardless of its apparent lacuna, this approach remained influential among very few sections of scholars till up to 1980s in India. For instance, Lawrence Lesnik (1974: 248) asserted that the construction of 'Padukal complex' (megaliths) in South India was not a result of independent origin, but rather an offshoot of diffusion of a similar tradition from Europe via Persia and Northern India.

2.5.2 CULTURAL HISTORICAL APPROACH

As noted above, a major passing shift in the approach of studies on megaliths in India was witnessed after the 1940s. For the first time focus of studies was given to ascertaining the dates and cultural sequences of several megaliths sites in India. In other words, unlike the initial phase of research, studies on megaliths after the 1940s in India became more of problem-oriented in nature. This significant shift can be accredited to the arrival of archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler in India in 1944 as the Director General of ASI. Wheeler was deeply concerned about the queries of cultural sequences of megaliths sites in India. He was of the opinion that the problems of studies on megaliths in India could be resolved if proper cultural sequences for them is established. His view is quite apparent in his remark -

> "A thousand of megalithic cists might be excavated with the utmost care without a significant addition to our knowledge of their chronology… it appeared to supply all the necessary factors for an initial scientific study of the Indian Megalithic problem" (Wheeler 1948:185).

Under his watchful instruction and supervision, excavations were carried out at the archaeological sites of Arikmedu and Brahmagiri in 1947. It was from these excavations that a proper cultural sequence or time frame of the megaliths site of Brahmagiri was first established in between 200 B.C to 50 A.D (*ibid*: 202, 273, and 300). Later in the post-independence period, more widespread archaeological research works were carried out in India, especially in between the 1950s and 1980s. During this period several archaeological departments and universities were also established in India. As a result, studies on megaliths became much more coordinated and systematic. The excavations

and explorations made during this period resulted in the systematic documentation of a large amount of data for the first time. In addition, the gradual application of radiocarbon dating on the material findings from the megaliths sites in the post-independence period also enabled in establishing proper dates and cultural sequences of a large number of megaliths sites. As a result, the validity of the previous approach, which mainly sought to understand the megaliths from the perspective of a single origin of tradition or diffusion of a similar tradition gradually lost its common ground amongst the later generation of scholars. However, the cultural-historical approach in the studies on megaliths was also not free from the limitations. The problem of the unsystematic style of data collection and lack of a proper theoretical framework largely remained a significant issue in this approach of studies as well (Mohanty & Selvakumar 2002: 315-320, 333).

2.5.3 SOCIO-EVOLUTIONIST APPROACH

One of the popular approaches that scholars have employed very recently in India to review and interpret megaliths is the socio-evolutionist approach. This approach focuses mainly on the aspects of the early social organisation, ideology, and economy of megaliths societies. This approach gained momentum in India after the 1990s and has continued to be one of the major approaches in the study of Indian megaliths. One of the forerunners among the proponent of socio-evolutionist approach is U. S. Moorti. In his published work *Megalithic Culture of South India: Socio-evolutionary Perspective* (1994) Moorti has relied on excavation reports prepared by older generations of scholarships. It is noteworthy to mention that his study was mainly based on the theoretical framework developed by Binford in which material findings of the megaliths burial sites are firstly categorised into three subgroups, viz. technomic, sociotechnic, and ideotechnic. After detailed and careful analysis of one eighty-three excavated burials reports, he contended that thirty-two of the burials were symbolic because it does not contain any skeleton remains. However, he could not analyse seventy-one burials which contained small and fragmentary skeleton remains. He did manage to analyse the remaining eighty-three burials along with their associated material remains. His study concluded that megaliths society was organised as ‘ranked society.’ He underlined that the megaliths burial sites suggest the beginning of early social differentiation in the

societies. He also contended that the megaliths societies had a subsistence based economy which was largely characterised by 'agro-pastoral economy' with products such as millet, cereal, and pulse production. But, he agreed with the fact that there was some sort of regional variation in the practice of agriculture among the megaliths societies. Although there were regional variations, he observed that cattle herding formed a major occupation of megaliths societies. With regard to the ideology of megaliths societies in South India, he argued that ideological orientations were manifested in rituals and religion. These had, in turn, played an important role in the functional aspects of social organisation. It also determined the nature of power relations within the societies. Further, he argued that the social organisation of the megaliths society was also largely governed by the attitude of the people towards life and death. This means that megaliths were not just a mere representation of the burials of dead people, but they were equally imbued with ideological meanings of the societies (Moorti 1994: 109-112).

S. B. Darsana (1998: 182-190) in her unpublished doctoral thesis entitled *Protohistoric Investigation in the Upper Palar Basin (Tamil Nadu)* studied the specific location of megaliths burial sites and presence of natural resources near the burial monuments in Tamil Nadu. In her study, she also incorporated Tamil literature and came to the conclusion that megaliths societies were organised into 'clan-based segmentary' societies. A subsequent synthesis by Robert Brubaker (2001: 293) applied a similar socio-evolutionary approach and examine the number of stone monuments at particular megaliths sites to discerned the degree of site size hierarchies. He concluded that the megaliths builders were likely organised in 'chiefdom' like societies. However, it is noteworthy to mention that Moorti (1994) and Brubaker (2001) relied heavily upon data from older generations of scholarship in their studies, which did not lay the same emphasis on detailed enumeration, statistical analysis, or on recording the variability of the sizes of the sites and each of the stone monuments systematically.

Recent studies on megaliths in South India has shown a shift in the methodology employed by scholars in their studies. Instead of relying on the data from the older generations of scholarships, studies are increasingly based on fresh field surveys and have employed modern equipment and survey techniques. The rationale behind

conducting fresh surveys is based on the assumption that with the latest survey techniques and research designs it would facilitate a more explicit and analytical study of megaliths. Thereby, fresh systematic field surveys are seen as an indispensable part of research designs to arrive at an in-depth apprehension on the forms of the social relationships of the societies that produced megaliths. In this regard, mention can be made of the systematic study carried out by Andrew M. Bauer (2015: 48-85) in the Tungabhadra River Basin in central Karnataka. Bauer's study primarily sought to address the relationship between the emergence of social inequalities and reformulation of the symbolic and cultural landscape in the Tungabhadra River Basin prior to the period of the emergence of the Vijayanagara Empire. In doing so, his study has introduced a new analytical model of study by not only limiting the focus of the study upon burial remains, grave goods, and mortuary architectures which were the focus of older generations of scholarships, but upon detail systematic analysis of the sizes of megaliths and their distribution pattern on the landscape. He argued that by emphasising on the detail enumeration, statistical analysis or systematic recording of the variability of the sizes of the sites and each of the stone monuments is necessary for an explicit and analytical study of megaliths. He argued that using statistical analysis, topographic maps, and satellite imageries would ensure a precise analysis of the forms of the social relationships of the societies that produced megaliths. In order to make his study possible, he conducted an intensive fieldwork covering an area of eighty square kilometers in the Tungabhadra River Basin and collected detail information of more than 1,000 distinctive forms of megaliths along with details of important early landscape features such as rock pools, reservoirs, and others. He then mapped the distinctive sizes of the megaliths along with early landscape features on the topographic maps (contour maps) and carried out a detailed statistical analysis of the distribution pattern of the megaliths on the landscape. Through detail mapping and analysis of the distinctive sizes of megaliths and their distribution pattern on the landscape, he contended that there were differential abilities among early inhabitants in terms of mobilising labour participants in the construction of megaliths. In other words, not all the early inhabitants of the Tungabhadra River Basin had the equal abilities to mobilise labour participants to construct megaliths. Further, through this new model of study, he argued that among the early inhabitants of the

Tungabhadra River Basin there were unequal and privilege claims of some groups of people to material and symbolic resources. Therefore, he concluded that megaliths were produced by unequal societies.

2.6 MEGALITHS IN NORTHEAST INDIA

Northeast India comprises of eight states, namely – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. Among these states, megaliths remains are found in Manipur, Assam, Meghalaya, and Mizoram. Therefore, Northeast India occupies a prominent place in the megaliths' map of the world. However, in sharp contrast to the widespread and intensive nature of research works that have been carried out in South India, Northeast India remains as one of the least explored regions of India in archaeological studies. The region has several prominent megaliths sites and the practice of construction of megaliths is still continued among very few groups of people. Therefore, the region holds huge prospects for studies on megaliths. This prospects of studies on megaliths in Northeast India had been highlighted earlier by colonial officers such as J. P. Mills (1933: 4-5) who wrote - "An archaeological characteristics of Assam is its wealth of megaliths. Indeed it is one of the few places in the world where monuments of this type are still erected…The recording of these has been almost entirely neglected." In spite of several early reports of the presence of megaliths in the region, only a handful of studies have been made so far. This is in sharp contrast to the nature of the studies on megaliths in South India, where hundreds of research works have been carried out since after the first discovery of megaliths by Babington.

Alexander Cunningham, who is regarded as the father of Indian archaeology did not manage to visit Northeast India to explore the immense potential of archaeological studies in the region. In this regard, the words of notable Indian archaeologist, Dhavalikar that archaeology in Northeast India is '*terra incognita*' (Devi & Neog 2014: 340) appears to be true. Some of the reasons for this neglect could have been due to the lack of well-trained archaeologists in the region, lack of archaeological departments, and difficulties of undertaking field surveys in the hilly area because of inaccessibility. Over and above, lack of proper funding for undertaking archaeological research in the region could have

been another factor. So far only a handful of studies on megaliths have been made in the region. Unfortunately, again the use of old and unappropriated theoretical framework by large sections of scholars in their studies have largely undermined the scope of studies on megaliths in the region. The lack of problem-oriented nature of studies along with lack of application of the suitable proper theoretical framework in the studies is clearly visible if one goes through some of the previous literature that dealt with the megaliths of the region. In this light, megaliths studies in Northeast India are in several ways more shrouded with problems than in other parts of the world where at least certain minimum consensus has arrived among scholars. In addition, the lack of systematic studies on megaliths in the region, in turn, leaves a vacuum and so it is quite arduous to identify any marked paradigm shift in the approach of studies. However, scholar namely Wangjin (2011: 25) have attempted to divide the phases of studies on megaliths in the Naga hills into two broad periods - colonial and post-colonial period. But his classification is broadly applicable only to studies on megaliths in the Naga hill and cannot fully be extended to the entire region of Northeast India.

2.6.1 A SHORT SURVEY OF STUDIES ON MEGALITHS IN NORTHEAST INDIA

The presence of megaliths in Northeast India was first brought to notice by the colonial officials and ethnographers who had taken up the task to survey the region, after the treaty of the Yandabo signed between the British and the Burmese (Myanmar) in 1826. The gradual extension of colonial power in the Northeastern region had compelled the British to gather information about the people they newly colonised. Therefore, survey became very important for the British to understand the geography, people, and history of newly governed people (Dalton 1872/1974: preface; Austen 1872: 122). It was from these surveys that the presence of megaliths in the Northeastern region of India was first brought to light by colonial officers. For instance, colonial officer Walter (1832: 500-508) first noted the presence of megaliths while traveling across the Khasi hills. He noted that megaliths were erected for the ‘Rajas’ and ‘Chief’ and remarked that stone monuments in the Khasi hill resemble those of ‘Stonehenge’ of England in terms of their sizes. In his travel diary, he also left a rough sketch of megaliths that he had seen in the

Khasi hill. In the later decade, reports about the presence of megaliths in the Khasi hill were also made by Hooker (1855: 276-277), Steel (1869), and others. Some of the notable colonial officials who had reported the presence of megaliths in various part of Northeast India includes Godwin Austen (1872), Hodson (1911), Shakespear (1912), and others. Unfortunately, despite repeated reports of the presence of megaliths in Northeast India by these colonial officials cum ethnographers, no archaeological investigation at these megaliths sites was undertaken. Thus the initial period of studies on megaliths in Northeast India was mainly occupied by colonial official cum ethnographer's travel and survey reports. It is noteworthy to mention that these reports lack scientific rigor as it stands today and is of the nature of descriptive accounts of what they had encountered in the region. Although they failed to conduct explicit studies, their reports nonetheless laid the foundation of the later studies in the region.

The second phase of studies on megaliths in Northeast India was started after the 1920s. Studies after the 1920s became little wider and it was predominated by anthropologists; some of them even include well trained professional anthropologists such as Furer Haimendorf (West 1994: 57-58). A prominent scholar in the megaliths studies of Northeast India is anthropologist J.H. Hutton. He spent about fifteen years of his life in the hilly areas. He carried out extensive anthropological studies on several aspects of the people that he lived and encountered in the region. Based upon surveys, he published around fifty-one articles and two major monographs entitled *The Angami Nagas* (1921a), and *The Sema Nagas* (1921b). Some of his published works were entirely focused on the studies of stone structures.

For instance, J.H. Hutton (1922: 55-57) examined the 'Y' shaped post (megaliths) constructed by the tribal groups of Northeast India, particularly by the Garo, Sema, Rengma Naga, Lotha, Ao Nagas, Khawtlang of the Haokip clan of Thado Kukis, Wa (Burma) along with the remains of the stone monuments he had encountered in the Naga Hills at Dimapur. By observing the similarities in morphological features of the construction of 'Y' shaped post among these tribal groups, he contended that the tradition of the stone erection in the region was defused from Bodo and Mon-Khmer tribes of central India and Cambodia.

He also further linked the practice of erection of stones (slabs and dolmens) among the Khasi tribes of Meghalaya with the stone structures of Chotanagpur tribes of Central India and came to the conclusion that these tribal groups had in the past a common origin. He remarked that -

> "It [megaliths] is a far cry from Assam to the west of Europe, but if the theory is logically applied, one cannot help wondering whether the ogham stones and cromlechs of our ancestors originally had similar associations" (Hutton 1923: 155-158).

Professional anthropologist, Furer Haimendorf who had spent about two years in Northeast India suggested that the rituals associated with the erection of megaliths among the tribal groups in the region such as 'feast of merit' among the Nagas to attain higher status, and 'the cult of the dead' among the Khasis were similar to the practices of construction of megaliths in Indonesia such as in Nias, Sumatra, Flores, Ambon, and Ceram (Haimendorf 1939: 222). He also carried out detailed comparative studies on stone building tradition among the tribal groups of Northeast India and tribal groups of Philippines. He pointed out that association of 'feast of the merit' among the Nagas in the construction of stone monuments and carved wooden monuments (forked post) is very much similar to the tradition of 'Ifugaos' tribes of Philipines. He stated that 'Ifugaos', also erected stone monuments to gain higher status in their society. Men who belonged to a wealthy family or the upper class called 'kadangyan' offered 'feast' with the sacrifice of pigs and buffaloes. Among the Naga, 'feast of merit' is offered. As among the Nagas, such feast is arranged in sequences, and a man may proceed to the higher and more lavish grades after he has done the series of preliminary and minor celebrations. In the 'Kiangan' region, a ceremony known as 'hagabi' is the climax of the sequences of the feast of merit. A man was entitled to have a wooden bench carved only after having performed the rites. Such a bench is placed in the space between the poles on which the house rests (Haimendorf 1971: 342).

A succinct review of the previous studies undertaken by the colonial officials and anthropologists makes it quite apparent that the approach in the studies on megaliths was

largely influenced by dominant discourse of diffusionist theory in which practices of stone erections were attributed to diffusion or migration of similar cultured people. In other words, megaliths tradition in the Northeast were seen as a tradition which was transplanted from other regions such as South East Asia and central India as they have exhibited similarities in the function.

In post-independence periods, ethnographic studies on megaliths in Northeast India were taken up by scholars such as David Roy, Potsangbam Binodini Devi, W. Jamir, and others. What is apparent in these studies is the obsession with the diffusionist approach that looks for the origin of the tradition in Northeast India in relation to Southeast Asia. For instance, Potsangbam Binodini Devi (2011: 214) asserted that the 'spirit seats' of Java and Bali, which consist of a thick horizontal stone and an upright stone have a similar ideology with those of the Kathi Mara Tukhu of Maos (Emermais), the Arou Atu of the Marams, and the Taideli of the Liangmei. She contended that the construction of menhirs in honour of a wealthy person or dead person is similar to the tradition of construction of the stone monuments in Sumatra. In a similar vein, W. Jamir (2014: 333-339) also carried out a comparative study on megaliths of Nagas especially by conducting a field survey in the Kohima and Phek districts of Nagaland in relation to the megaliths of South East Asia and attempted to trace a common ground and affinities of the tradition of megaliths found in these regions. She asserted that there is a chain like the occurrence of the 'feast of the merit' in the construction of megaliths from Nagaland, Manipur, and Burma to Thailand and Indonesia.

In a nutshell, these studies are typically based upon the simple classifications of megaliths in terms of their function and morphology. It has mainly looked for cultural affinities in the construction of megaliths. Besides, these groups of scholars also provided the same kind of narration as it was done by colonial officials in the studies on megaliths in the region. Therefore, a paradigm shift in the approach of studies is not clearly visible. Having said this, in the recent years, very few scholars have started to look at megaliths from the current theoretical framework of socio-evolutionist or socio functional approach by focusing on the aspects of ideology and symbolic meaning which were associated with the erection of megaliths. In this regard, mention can be made of notable recent studies

on megaliths carried out by W. Wangjin and Rammathot Khongreiwo. W. Wangjin (2014: 318-330) in his study on megaliths tradition among the Konyak and Angami Nagas has suggested that the construction of commemorative or memorial, stone circles, and burial chambers among the Konyak and Angami Naga were imbued with several meanings and multiple ideas. Therefore, according to him, megaliths served as a real marker of identities of those people who had erected them. He contended that stone structures were a medium through which knowledge was represented and interpreted and thus continually passed down from generation to generation. In a similar vein, Rammathot Khongreiwo (2014: 293-314) studied the practice of megaliths by the Nagas in pre-Christian societies and opined that the earliest tradition and memories with regard to the erection of megaliths in pre-Christian Naga societies are closely woven around the folklore and legends that still exist in the present Naga societies. Although the Nagas have been recently converted to Christianity, their early memories associated with megaliths and landscape still linger in the minds of the present generation.

Although these recent works have attempted to look at megaliths from the socio-evolutionist or socio-functional approach, many aspects of studies on megaliths which are meticulously undertaken under this approach in other parts of India and in the world at large such as queries on the nature of the early social organisation, economy, cultural sequence, and others, are hitherto not even properly studied. Given the lack of systematic archaeological surveys and lack of problem-oriented nature of studies from a proper theoretical framework, most of these studies have ended up by providing only simplistic and descriptive accounts of the early tradition of the erection of stones. Therefore, the current scholarly endeavours on megaliths in the region, unfortunately, are still influence by the old theoretical frameworks which mainly seeks to apprehend the cultural affinities in the practice of the megaliths among the different region rather than looking at several social relationship of the early societies. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to argue that the studies on megaliths in Northeast India are still in an embryonic stage.

2.6.2 CHRONOLOGY OF MEGALITHS

To take the matter forward, one of the main problems in the studies on megaliths in Northeast India is the question of cultural sequence and date. It is noteworthy to mention

that the issue is not limited to megaliths alone, but is rather a common issue for other archaeological findings in the region. Scholars have identified the lack application of radiocarbon dating and other analytical methods of studies as one of the prime reasons for incapable to establish the date and cultural sequence of archaeological sites (Jamir & Hazarika 2014: 5). In fact, megaliths sites in Northeast India are not even properly explored and excavated so far. Very few sites have been excavated in the region. The dates which are coming out from these few excavated sites cannot be taken as the generalised date for all of the megaliths sites of Northeast India for the reason that the studied sites are at first very few and thus it is imprudent to apply it as a sort of generalised date for all of the megaliths sites. In this regard, the excavation at the Marakdola (a post-neolithic site) in Khasi hill of Meghalaya can be considered as very remarkable in the history of studies on megaliths in the region because it is at this site that the first excavation was made and the radio carbon dating was applied to the charcoal sample to establish the cultural sequence of the site. Through radio carbon dating of the charcoal sample, the date of the site was placed to as early as 1292 A.D. (Rao 1979: 202). Similarly, the excavation at the Jotsoma village in Nagaland and subsequent dating of the material findings have also suggested that the start of the tradition of megaliths construction at this village was from 1700 A.D. (Devi & Neog 2014: 349). Excavation at Khamar in Karbi Anglong in Assam and subsequent dating of the material remains has also shown that the site belongs to 1300 A.D. (Sarma 2014: 359).

2.7 ARCHAEOLOGY IN MANIPUR

Archaeological investigation and excavation began in Manipur as early as 1935 by W. Yumjao Singh, the first and foremost archaeologist of Manipur. He conducted excavations at two sites, namely - Kameng and Sagaithen, and collected ‘antiquities’ including old manuscripts, copper plate, and ‘ancient’ coins. Later a report on these archaeological findings was published in 1935. It was mentioned in the report that various artefacts collected were despatched for examination by an expert to the Indian Museum at Calcutta. However, the report of the examination has never published and the nature of the artefacts is still unknown. In the post-independence period, the archaeological investigation in the state was carried out in 1967 by one of the most

eminent archaeologists, namely O. Kumar Singh, who later became the superintendent of the State Archaeology Department. It was through his initiatives and excavation works at several 'prehistoric' sites that the potential for the archaeological study was first realised. The establishment of the Department of State Archaeology in 1978 in Manipur had also in several ways contributed to the exploration and excavation work at several important archaeological sites in the state (*Archaeology in Manipur* 1988: 1). On the basis of the stone findings in the state, it can be broadly classified into four categories, viz. Palaeolithic, Hoabinhian, Neolithic, and megaliths.

2.7.1 PALAEOLITHIC FINDS

The Palaeolithic remains in the state is mainly characterised by stones and bone tools. The materials remain of this period are found both in the caves and open-air sites located in various parts of the state. The first report of discovery and excavation of the paleolithic site in the state was made at Kangkhui site by O. Kumar Singh. The report of the excavation was later published in *Indian Archaeology: Review (1968-1969)*. The report was primarily based on the excavation of a trial trench that O. Kumar Singh had undertaken at this site. The published report contains findings of stone tools, viz. a handaxes, cleaver, points, borers, scrapers, blades, cores, and few bone points (IAR 1968-69: 20). Several other Paleolithic sites were also discovered in the state and in 1974, Machi site was discovered and it resulted to the identification of a pebble chopper (Singh 1991: 3). Further, in 1983, exploratory work was conducted at the cave site of Sajik Tampak, Chandel district. This led to the discovery of stone artefacts that consists of scraper, flakes, plit pebbles and core tools (IAR 1983-84: 59). In 1989, Singtom site in Chandel district was also explored and Paleolithic stone tools consisting of ovate type handaxes and flakes were discovered (Singh 1991: 4).

2.7.2 HOABINHIAN FINDS

The transitional cultural phase between Paleolithic and Neolithic in Southeast Asia is generally referred to as Hoabinhian by scholars. The main characteristic of this culture is the manufacture of tools made of pebbles, which have been chipped in one direction only and have an edge either at one end or along one side. The cortex of the pebble covers the

two faces. In Manipur, there are two Hoabinhian sites which have so far been identified: Tharon cave and Nongpok Keithelmanbi open-air sites (Singh 2014: 126). The Hoabinhian remains of Manipur were first investigated in 1979 and were later reported in, *Indian Archaeology: Review (1980-1981).* This field-based exploratory work also yielded scrapers, scrapers on the flake, elliptical pebble with grinding faces, and patinated edge-ground pebble tools (IAR 1980-81: 44). Another Hoabinhian site, Nongpok Keithelmanbi locality-1 was explored in 1983 and Hoabinhian stone artefacts were discovered at the depth of between 51 cm and 61 cm from the surface and it is not connected to pottery. The Hoabinhian of this site is a pebble tool industry, which contains few flakes and blade stone tools. Quartzitic sandstone is the principal raw material used in the making of these Hoabinhian artefacts, except for a blade and scraper that were made of chert. The Hoabinhian artefacts collected from the Nongpok Keithelmanbi locality-1 include Chisel-edge chopper, scraper, blade, flakes, split-pebble, pick, round age tool. The Hoabinhian artefacts collected from the Tharon cave site include chopper, handaxe, hand adzes, scraper, pointed tool, edge-ground knife, quern and grinder (Singh 2014: 126-132).

2.7.3 NEOLITHIC FINDS

Neolithic stone tools are found both in the hills and valley areas of Manipur. The Neolithic period of the state is characterised by stones tools that consist of chisels, hoe-blade, triangular axe, quadrangular axe, adzes, and pottery. The stone tools are mostly made by grinding and polishing technique; chipping, sawing and pecking techniques are also evident in few of the findings. These stone tools have oval, circular, square or rectilinear median cross-section. Typologically these can be compared with those found in Southeast Asia. One peculiarity of the neoliths from the state is the inclusion of a tiny variety of stones which range from 49 mm to 46 mm and 24 mm to 32 mm in length and breadth respectively. In Manipur, Neolithic pottery remains are also found in four sites, viz. Phunan, Napachik, Laimanai, and Nongpok Keithelmanbi. On the basis of the pottery types the Neoliths of the state, the specimens can be further subdivided as Corded ware culture, Tripod ware culture, and Phunan (geometric) ware culture. The Corded ware culture is represented by handmade and ill-fired pottery decorated with cord marks

and is found in the Nongpok Keithelmanbi locality-1. The Corded ware overlies the Hoabinhian after a short break in the stratigraphy and dated back to the 1st half of the third millennium B.C. (Singh 1991: 6-7).

The Tripod ware culture, on the other hand, is characterised by the corded-marked pottery provided with tripod legs. These are found at Napachik and Laimanai sites in association with ground neolithic stone tools. At Napachik, the associated findings are ground triangular celts with oval cross-section, microliths, edge-ground knife and perforator, net-sinker, and spindle-whorl of pottery. The microliths consist of blade, point, burin, and scrapper and are made of quartz. Pottery from Phunan site are handmade and decorated with a geometric pattern consisting of circles, parallel lines, wavy or straight lines either in pairs or band etc. which are produced by incised, appliqued and stamped methods. Neolithic celts having square cut sides, quadrangular axes and adzes etc. might also belong to this phase of the Neolithic period, though so far association of these types of stone tools with the pottery at Phunan site is yet to be established. Stone tools and pottery of this phase show that they were technologically more evolved than the earlier two phases (*ibid*: 8).

2.7.4 MEGALITHS

Several megaliths sites have so far been reported by the scholars in different parts of Manipur. The earliest account of megaliths construction in the state was recorded in the Cheitharol Kumpapa[1] and is dated as early as 1558 C.E. It is clearly mentioned in the Cheitharol Kumpapa that the tradition of the stone erection was practiced by the valley people of the state (Parrat 2006: 57, 62, 67). However, details of the practice of erection of megaliths were not mentioned in the Royal Chronicle. Later in the colonial period, more detail eyewitness accounts and documentation were carried out by colonial officials cum ethnographers. The first colonial reports that mentioned the presence of megaliths in Manipur was by T. C. Hodson in his *Naga Tribes of Manipur* (1911). Hodson (1911: 186-191) was surprised to encounter the stone monuments in the areas inhabited by the tribal groups, viz. Maram, Mao, Maring, Tangkhul, Kabui, and Kuki. His interest in the

[1] Cheitharol Kumpapa or Cheitharol Kumbaba is the royal chronicle of the kings of Manipur.

material remains that has antique values is clearly visible from the fact that he made the classification of stone monuments into four categories -

1. Monoliths (either found singly or arrange symmetrically in rows, avenues, circles or ovals)

2. Cairns or heap of stone

3. Single smaller stones

4. Flat stones.

He also provided eyewitness accounts of rituals and ceremonies practiced by these tribal groups during the time of the erection of stones. Further, his book also provided the details of measurement of some of the stone monuments located at Willong Khullen village (Senapati District), along with a photograph of the stone monuments.

Similar to Hodson, Colonial officer J. Shakespear (1912: 70-71) in his *Kabui Notes* noted the presence of megaliths in Kabui village of Kangjupkhul (Tamenglong District). He also provided eyewitness accounts of the association of the 'feast of merit' during the erection of stone monuments amongst the Kabui tribes. J.H. Hutton (1929: 332) in his *Assam Megaliths* also provided a detailed plan of the stone monuments at the Katak area of Willong Khullen village and mentioned about the association of water sources with the stone monuments. In a nutshell, these colonial official's accounts are all centered upon providing limited descriptive eyewitness accounts of what they had unexpectedly encountered during their survey in hilly areas of the state. Therefore, a clear-cut approach is not visible in their accounts as their reports are in the nature of descriptive notes of the presence of stone monuments.

In the post-independence period, investigation at megaliths sites of the state was intensified. O. K. Singh of the Department of State Archaeology carried out exploratory work in the Salangthel area of Churchandpur district and it led to the discovery of groups of megaliths located in the north to south directions on the Thangjing range (IAR 1983-84: 59). Subsequently, an archaeological survey was conducted at this site by the Mutua

Museum in the year 1983. This was followed by a series of field investigation and explorations at this site. Unfortunately, no reports were published by the Mutua Musem. In the years that follow, R. K. Tamphasana Devi again conducted a survey at this site and in return, she published a book entitled *Megalithic monuments of Salangthel, Manipur* (1989). Based on the field survey, she has classified the stone monuments in term of their morphology, viz. menhirs, dolmenoids, and stone circles (Devi 1989: 4-33).

Unfortunately, she could not provide any interpretation of the megaliths remains of this site. A few years later, anthropologist Potsangbam Binodini Devi (2011: 8-26) carried out the first major extensive ethnographic survey at several megaliths sites of Manipur for her doctoral thesis entitled *Studies on the Megalithic Remains of Manipur* which was submitted at Gauhati University in 1993. Her thesis was later published as *The Megalithic Culture of Manipur* (2011). She conducted a more extensive ethnographic field survey in the early 1990s and brought to light both the living and non-living traditions of megaliths among thirteen tribal groups of the state, viz. Annals, Chekherangs, Kabuis (Rongmeis), Kharams, Koirengs, Liangmais, Maos, Maram, Marings, Poumais, Tangkhuls, Thangals, and Vaiphei. She made classification of megaliths on the basis of their structures and functions and recorded the traditional methods of construction of megaliths such as religion, rituals, belief, dragging of the stone, and expenditure of resources.

Her work has shown the presence of different forms and traditions of megaliths in the tribal inhabited hilly areas of the state. Based on her survey, she classified the megaliths of the thirteen tribals groups of the state into seven morphological categories -

(i) Menhirs, alignment, and avenues,

(ii) Dolmens,

(iii) Cairns (with or without stone circles),

(iv) Stone circle,

(v) Flat stones or capstones,

(vi) Stone seat and

(vii) Miscellaneous types

Again, on the basis of function, she classified megaliths into eight categories -

(a) Commemorative, or memorial stones,

(b) Watch tower,

(c) Religious stones,

(d) Witness or judiciary stones,

(e) Gravestones,

(f) Resting stones or stone seat,

(g) Village gate, and

(h) Village foundation stones

(*ibid*: 39-50)

Similarly, Bokul Mutum (2002: 187-212) also provided ethnographic information of the construction of the megaliths among the Mao and Maram Nagas in Senapati district of Manipur. He examined the megaliths from the standpoint of their function and morphology. Given this range of scholarship, megaliths study in the state is still limited in its purview and has been only ethnographic studies. No detail documentation and proper interpretation of megaliths through a proper theoretical framework that would help in unraveling various aspects of the past societies, viz. early social organisation, economy, ideology, and cultural sequence still remains as a task to be accomplished. Moreover, no systematic archaeological excavation has been made so far at the megaliths sites of the state.

2.8 PREVIOUS RESEARCH AT WILLONG KHULLEN VILLAGE

Megaliths at Willong Khullen village was first reported by T.C. Hodson (1911: 186-187) in his *The Naga Tribes of Manipur* (1911). This book was the result of his extensive field

survey undertaken in the tribal inhabited areas of Manipur. He was deeply fascinated by his unexpected encounter with the massive size stone monuments at Willong Khullen village. This is very clearly apparent from his remark that -

> "At Uilong [Willong Khullen village] there is a very remarkable collection of stones, which is not mentioned in any of the earlier writers on Manipur, as McCulloch, Brown, Pemberton or Johnstone, though it is certain that much more than once they were close to the village, which lies in a remote corner of the State."

His awareness of the significance of archaeological remains is clearly reflected from the fact that he had personally requested Colonel H. St. P. Maxwell to carry out measurement work of the stone monuments which he himself could not carry out during his visit to the village. At his request, Colonel Maxwell sent C.S.I. Babu Nithor Nath Banerji to this village to carry out a detailed measurement of the stone monuments. The recorded measurement of the stone monuments was later added in Hodson's book. In addition to the measurement report, Hodson also provided ethnographic information about the tradition of the erection of stone monuments in this village (*ibid*: 186-191). Colonial officer L. W. Shakespear in his *History of Upper Assam and, Upper Burma and North Eastern Frontier* (1912) also mentioned the stone monuments in Willong Khullen village. He called the stone monuments at the Katak area of the village as 'Stonehenge'. He wrote -

> "… just outside of the village [Willong Khullen village]…stands thirty-two monoliths arranged in a large oval, from which again start lines of the fourteen monoliths, the height of all varying between eight feet and thirteen and a half feet, and the breadth between two feet and nine and a half feet. " (Shakespear 1912: 89).

Anthropologist J. H. Hutton (1929: 332) later conducted a survey at the Katak area of Willong Khullen village and rejected the earlier 'plan' of stone monuments prepared by Banerjee for Hodson's book and termed it as 'erroneous' and 'misleading'. He provided an explicit plan of all the stone monuments at the Katak area of Willong Khullen village

and even indicated the surrounding early landscape features such as footpaths and water sources in his plan. In the post-independence period, anthropologist Potsangbam Binodini Devi (2011: 146-155) carried out an ethnographic study of the megaliths in this village as a part of her Ph.D. thesis. Based on her field survey, she has classified the megaliths in this village into six categories on the basis of their function and morphology -

1) Menhir associated with Dolmen (Witness Stone)

2) Cairn (Watchtower)

3) Menhir (Memorial Stones)

4) Horizontal flat stone (Holy Stones)

5) Hood stone or Capstone (Associated with headhunting)

She also carried out measurement work of the stones she had encountered during her survey. Although her book was a major work on this site, unfortunately, she could not provide any interpretations on the nature of early society at Willong Khullen village. In addition, she also did not attempt to address the question of cultural sequence with regard to the beginning of megaliths construction at this village. Therefore, fresh problem-oriented research at this site can contribute significantly in understanding the nature of the early societies and in establishing a proper cultural sequence at this site.

Evidently, megaliths of Willong Khullen village is understudied and most of the previous works only provided short ethnographic accounts of the practice of erection of megaliths in the village. Therefore, there is still an immense scope of study on megaliths at this village. Firstly, there is a possibility for carrying out a detail documentation of megaliths at this village by using systematic archaeological field survey method by employing modern techniques and tools. There is also the possibility of identifying and locating the detail locations of the megaliths and ancient structures on the sitemaps (GIS maps). This, in turn, can be really useful in assessing the relationship between stone monuments and landscape features at the site. As previous works have stated that stone monuments are located in the settlement area of the village so an ethnographic study can considerably

prove to a useful tool in understanding the social context of the creation of megaliths which archaeological fieldwork would find it difficult to answer. In order words, the details of how stones were quarried, dragged, erected, and various social processes involved in the erection of stone monuments could be ascertained, recorded, analysed, and interpreted. It must be noted that a fresh survey on the megaliths in this village from a multidisciplinary approach: archaeological and ethnoarchaeological approaches, would help in addressing some of the most arduous questions of the megaliths in Manipur which will also further contribute in the larger understanding of megaliths around the world.

2.9. DISCUSSION

To conclude, megaliths have been a widely studied topic in archaeological studies. Several approaches have been used by scholars in their attempt to better interpret and understand them. Like in other parts of the world where intensive nature of research has been carried out by many scholars to address issues with regard to various aspects of megaliths societies; problem-oriented fresh archaeological research is a pressing need, especially at the least studied megaliths sites of Manipur where some of the early traditions still remain as living tradition among the people who are inhabiting around the sites.

It is quite surprising that even with repeated reports of the presence of several megaliths sites in the state, studies have for whatsoever reasons been very meager as compared to the intensive nature of studies conducted in different parts of the world. Due to lack of the archaeological endeavours in the state, there is still a huge scope of discovering several other unknown archaeological sites. Having said this, there is also a need to change the way in which scholars have approached the subject matter. Rather than carrying out proper in-depth case studies at the megaliths sites, it appears that the current generations of scholarships are far more interested in examining several megaliths sites to look for affinities in the practice of megaliths. So it has failed to capture the uniqueness and regional specificities of several megaliths sites. In other words, looking at megaliths from the diffusionist perspectives or search for cultural connection of megaliths sites in Manipur or in areas of Northeast India with the megaliths of South East Asia is not

sufficient and it requires further in-depth case studies. This is not to argue that cultural similarities which have been discussed in between these regions by scholars are totally invalid, but that such approaches tend to ignore the regional specificities. Without in-depth case studies at several megaliths sites of the Northeast from the multidisciplinary approach of archaeology and ethnography, it would be difficult to present a holistic understanding of the nature of the societies that had produced megaliths. Therefore, detail case studies need to be carried out at all the least explored megaliths sites of Manipur and Northeast India.

CHAPTER III

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE MEGALITHS AT WILLONG KHULLEN VILLAGE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Geographical Information System (hereafter, GIS) has recently become an important analytical tool of archaeological studies, archaeologists have employed this new tool to analyse field data in order to understand the complexities of the relationship between human and landscape. It is mainly through the application of GIS that archaeologists are able to carry out a wide array of new studies and observe the manner in which human and landscape interacts so as to gain insights about early socio-political organisation and how it was largely influenced by the availability and control of specific resources in the landscape (Kosiba & Bauer 2013: 61-62). Since the advent of radiocarbon dating as a means to study archeological findings, GIS has been considered as one of the latest breakthroughs in the field of archeological studies.

In due cognizance of the potential of GIS as a more scientifically nuance tool in the discipline of archaeology, this chapter first makes an attempt to systematically document megaliths and earlier ancestral structures which are particularly found in Willong Khullen village. Secondly, it also attempts to map out and identify the pattern of megaliths and earlier ancestral structures on GIS maps. In doing so, a preliminary attempt is made to understand the labour differences which are indicated by the distribution pattern of different sizes of stone monuments on the landscape. The rationale of this approach is to get an insight into the nature of the early social organisation in this site. In the absence of any scientific dating and knowledge of the earlier cultural sequence at this site, a preliminary analysis on the basis of the architectural pattern, and colour setting of megaliths have been made to establish a relative chronology among different forms of megaliths.

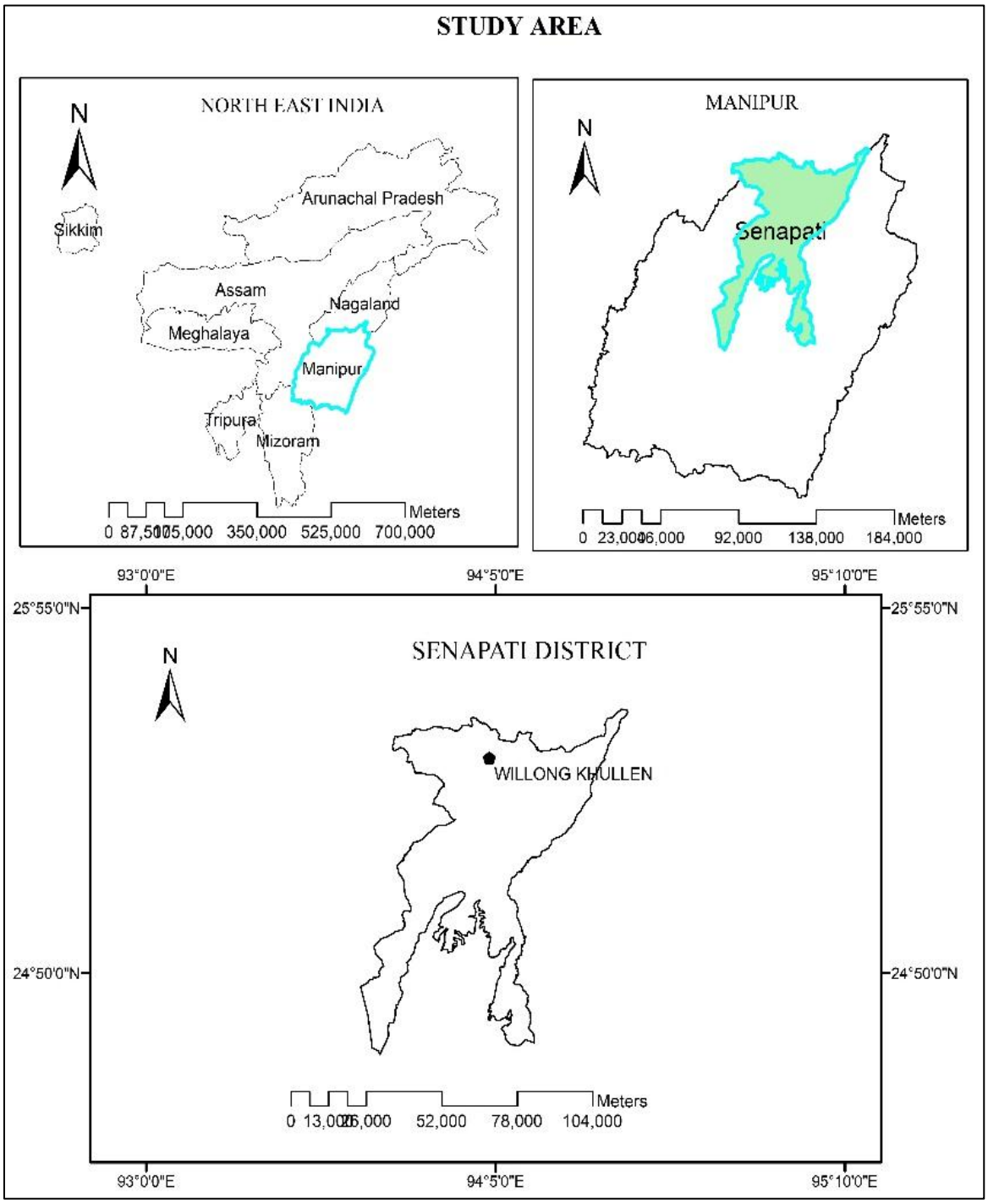
3.2 GEOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

The Indian state of Manipur is located in between latitude 23°50' N to 25°41' N and longitude 93°2' E to 94°47' E. The capital of the state is Imphal. The state shares its

boundary lines with Nagaland in the north, Mizoram in the south, Assam in the west, and international boundary with Myanmar in the south and east. The total area of the state is 22,374 km². Out of this total area, 20,571 km² are hilly areas while a small portion of 1,843 km² or about nine percent of the total area of the state constitutes the valley area. Therefore, topographical features of the state have both the features of hill and valley area. The valley is located centrally and is encircled by hill ranges. Its elevation point is about 790 meters above the sea level (hereafter, MASL). Its average slope is from north to south direction. Similarly, the hilly region also follows the similar direction of the slope, but it has a higher elevation point that ranges from 1,500 to 1,800 MASL. Some of the hills in the northern part of the state have a remarkable elevation point of over 3,000 MASL (Laiba 2001: 41-42). The state is home to more than thirty-four different ethnic communities. Each of the ethnic community has its own distinctive traditions, custom, dresses, food habits, and so on.

Geologically, the state is a part of 'Trans-Himalayan formation' (*ibid*: 44). The rock formation of the state can broadly be divided into five main categories, viz. (i) Disang series (ii) Barails series, (iii) Tipam series, (iv) Surma series, and (v) Alluvium. The Disang series consists of shale, siltstone, sandstone, and others, are found in the eastern part of the state and on some portion of the Imphal valley. The Barails groups, which consist of sandstone, shale, clay, and others, are found in the middle and western part of the state including the mountainous and the peripheral area of the state. The sandstone and shale of the Tipams and Surmas series are found in the western part of the state. It belongs to the late 'Miocene' period. The Tipam series are found alongside the Surma series. The Alluvium series, which consist of sand, silt and clay are widely available at several locations in the state. But, the largest occurrence of the Alluvium soil is in the valley areas of the state (Meitei 2010: 16-23).

The climatic condition of the state is sub-tropical monsoon climate. It is characterised by hot rainy summer and dry winter. However, depending on the elevation point, different area of the state experience different climatic conditions. The hilly region of the state experience a relatively colder climate, while the plain region experience warm and humid climate. The state receives abundant rainfall of about 110 to 350 cm per year. However, owing to its topographical features the hill areas receive more rainfall in comparison to the plain areas. Rainfall usually starts in the state from April and ends in October month.



Map 1: Study area of Willong Khullen village

The highest amount of rainfall and the maximum temperature in the state is recorded during the month of May, June, and July. The average temperature of the state is from 0˚ to 39˚ Celsius.

The study area - Willong Khullen village is located in between 25°28'11.9" N to 25°28'16.5" N latitudes, and 93°58'26.3" E to 93°58'03.6" E longitudes in the Mao-Maram tehsil of Senapati district, Manipur. The village is approximately 16 hectares in area. It is located on the cliff or on the top ridge of Maguilong hill. The village is about 117 km away from Imphal and about 37 km away from Maram Bazar. It is bound by Yangkhullen village in the north and on the northwest by Yangkhunou village, on the west by Willong Khunou village, and on the south by Sangulong village. Being a part of the hill district of Senapati, Willong Khullen village experiences similar subtropical monsoon type of climate as in other parts of Senapati district. The temperature of the Senapati district varies from 3.4˚ to 34.1˚ Celsius. It receives an annual rainfall of about 670 to 1,450 mm. As a result of heavy rainfall, surrounding areas of the village apart from the main settlement areas are thickly covered with vegetation and forest. The forest area is also endowed with different species of flora and fauna.

The geological profile of the village belongs to the Barail series of the rock formation. As mentioned above, the Barail series consists of sandstone, siltstone, mudstone, and conglomerate. The soil in the study area mainly consists of ferruginous or non-laterite soils and laterite soil. The colour of the ferruginous soil found in the village is red and yellowish red. The other forms of soil, which is available in the area is laterite soil. This soil type is usually red in colour, acidic and coarse in its texture.

The site is presently inhabited by Maram 'Naga'[2]. The main settlement area is located on the uppermost elevated portion of the hill and it becomes sparse on the lower slope of the hill. The inhabitants are organised into village-based communities. They speak the Maram dialect. According to the Census Report of 2011, the village has a total population of 4,276 (District Census Report, 2011). The total population figure of the village is constituted by three tribal clans, namely - Kapsiilamei, Kangkuinamei, and Hangnamei

[2] The use of the term 'Naga' is still a very contentious issue among some section of the scholars. However, for convenience sake the term has been used in this dissertation.

Houmei. Agriculture is the main source of economy of the village. At present, the majority of people in the village are followers of the Christian religion. However, there are also about twenty households that still follow the ancestral religion. In the local dialect, the ancestral religion is known as *Maidamei*. The followers of this religion still continue to uphold several aspects of the early traditions and cultures. The detail of the ethnographic information about the village will be discussed in chapter IV.

3.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

In archaeology, field survey is considered as the first stage of long-term studies. It is also the principal method for studying aspects of the past. It allows archaeologists to discover sites that they may wish to excavate, to assess potential damage to archaeological resources from construction, road building or other development and to assess aspects of past settlement systems and regional economies (Banning 2002:1). The archaeological survey can range from very informal exploration to detailed and explicit prospection or sampling strategies which are designed to maximise the probability of detecting sites or artefacts over a region or to get a representative sampling of cultural materials. It also ranges from visual inspection of fairly obvious features and artefacts on the modern surface, known as 'field walking,' to geophysical remote sensing (*ibid*: 1).

Field surveys in archaeology is not simply a substitution for archaeological excavation or meant only to discover sites to be excavated. It is also able to address some research questions that excavation alone does not answer. The only regional survey is capable of producing the data we need to investigate the prehistoric use of landscape, settlement hierarchies, and human behaviours that were dispersed in space instead of concentration within the more obvious kinds of 'sites'. *(ibid*: 1). There are several survey methods in archaeology, but the pedestrian survey or footwalk remains as one of the most effective in the areas where there is clear visibility, less vegetation, and where sites are noticeable through visual simple inspection. The pedestrian survey involves walking over the surface of a region and visually inspecting that surface for the archaeological evidence. Usually, features and architectural remains are either recorded or collected (Hester *et al.* 2016: 54).

3.4 METHODOLOGY

Taking cue about the presence of a large number of megaliths at Willong Khullen village from the previous studies, a preliminary archaeological survey was undertaken in the month of September 2017. The survey undertaken has employed modern survey equipment and tools. The first difficulty which had been encountered upon reaching the village was that many of the megaliths were found to be located within the settlement area of the village. Therefore, it was very clear at the first sight that a formal survey technique or 'transect' walking would not be possible at the village at any rate, because there are houses which are located very close to the stone monuments. Moreover, the hilly, forested topographic terrain of the site posed a considerable challenge to conduct a formal transect survey walk. Secondly, conducting a field survey in the village has been strictly prohibited by the village council over the last two decades. These challenges, however, were largely resolved through a sincere request to the villagers; a formal permission was eventually granted to carry out a smooth pedestrian survey within and around the village area. Besides these problems, the survey had to endure the difficult climatic condition. On reaching the village for the survey, there was continuous rain for many days, which had halted the pace of the survey. As the pace of the survey work was impeded, it became necessary to stay in the village for several days. Therefore, financial constraint was apparently felt during the survey time. Nonetheless, given the challenges, a smooth survey was carried out in the area with the indispensable help provided by the locals, and especially with the support of friends.

The archaeological field survey technique employed during the field survey is partly based on the survey methodology employed by Andrew Bauer (2015: 51-52) in his study of the megaliths of the Tungabhadra River Basin in central Karnataka. To describe about the field survey in the village, first and foremost, consent was sought from the village council, chairperson, and the villagers. After getting necessary permission, a survey team consisting of three crew members with me as the supervisor and head of the team started an intensive survey in and around the village. During the survey, megaliths were not given the primary focus but the landscape features and ancestral structures in the village were also taken into consideration for the purpose of recording. While doing so, details of

megaliths, viz. shape, size, orientation, and alignment (in the case of menhirs) were carefully measured and recorded. The survey was undertaken with a handheld Global Positioning System (hereafter, GPS) device and by using mobile GPS application so as to enable exact recording of the location of every single stone monument. However, it is noteworthy to mention that cairns which are placed under flat stones were not recorded with a separate GPS point. In cases, where cairns were located separately, a single GPS point was noted during the field survey. For each of the flat stone encountered during the survey, numbers of stones were counted, and the respective positions were recorded carefully. The shape and sizes of the flat stones were also measured during the survey in order to examine the variation in the sizes and distribution pattern on the landscape. In case of the stone circle, area and extent of each of the stone circle were measured and only a single GPS point was recorded. This was done to enable plotting of every GPS point of the megaliths on the GIS maps for spatial analysis. Furthermore, recording of each of the stone cluster was carried out with proper photography using 100 cm scales, small blackboard, and a north arrow to indicate the direction of the photographs. All the measurement work was carried out by using meter and centimeter measuring tapes. The position of the ancestral structures such as '*morung*'[3] and village gate were also noted during the field survey. Village's pathways and present settlement pattern were equally and carefully observed during the survey. Geomorphology and landscape features were also examined during the survey. Similarly, the expanse of local settlement around megaliths was observed carefully. Further, to establish a relative chronological sequence among different forms of megaliths in the village, a new survey technique was also developed during the fieldwork. This new model of the survey was employed to primarily examine the architectural design and colour settings of the stone monuments.

3.5 DOCUMENTATION

Systematic documentation of the field findings is an important step before carrying out any archaeological analysis and interpretation. Because it is through a proper documentation that a detailed analysis and interpretation of archaeological data is

[3]Morung is a bachelor's dormitory, or club in which unmarried boys and girls used to sleep after attaining certain age group. In earlier days, it also functioned as an important institution of the village, where bachelors of the village were taught with moral lessons and societal norms (see also, Tiba 2006: 53-54).

possible. The benefits of documentation are manifold: firstly, it helps to address specific research questions; secondly, it could be used as a database by any future researcher who wishes to examine the changes in the site or to carry out fresh field survey at the site. Through the above-mentioned survey method, a total of thirty-nine megaliths clusters were properly documented from this site. Out of the total of thirty-nine megaliths clusters, thirty-six clusters have never been previously reported or documented by the scholars. It is noteworthy to mention that during the time of the field survey, all of the megaliths clusters either big or small were assigned or leveled as 'site' to enable precise and systematic documentation. So, the words such as – 'cluster' or 'site' with an assigned survey number will be used interchangeably throughout this chapter. The cluster of megaliths which were found in the village mainly consists of megaliths, viz. menhir, cairn, stone circle, and flat stone (Table 1). From the thirty-nine megaliths clusters or sites identified, a total of over 150 distinctive forms of megaliths could be recorded (Table 2). During the survey, details of three *morungs* and an ancestral village gate were recorded. The documentation of the surrounding landscape and changing ground surface features are difficult to quantify on a table in this chapter. Therefore, they are used appropriately while describing the surrounding area or landscape features around megaliths. It is noteworthy to mention that during the fieldwork locals, however, did not allow to conduct survey work at a specific area of the village known as Katak (Figure 1). Therefore, survey data of the previous scholars will be used for this area. In addition, for this specific area, this study will also rely on the 'plan' of the stone monuments recorded by colonial official cum ethnographer - J.H. Hutton (Map 4). The use of previously recorded data is done to get a comprehensive distribution pattern of megaliths to facilitate a more nuanced spatial analysis of the megaliths and landscape features.

TABLE 1

THE DETAILED CLASSIFICATION OF THE MEGALITHS

Megaliths (Local Name)	**Descriptions**
Menhir (Tiisum)	A roughly dressed single monolith either small or big in size, which is erected vertically above the ground surface. It is either a memorial or commemorative stone in function.
Cairn (Ranii Atu)	Small heaps of stones which are generally associated with the burials.
Stone circle (Ranii Atu)	It consists of huge boulders of slabs of stones which are placed usually above the cairns and rising above the ground surface, appearing circular or rectangular in shape. It is non-sepulchral in function.
Flat stones (Arou Atu)	Large slabs of stones which are placed horizontally above the burials. So, it is sepulchral in function.
Stone Avenue (Tiisum)	A group of menhirs which are built either in rows or following a certain pattern. It is non-sepulchral in function.

Source: Personal Fieldwork

KATAK STONE AVENUE (Figure 1)

The word - '*Katak'* literally means 'stone erecting place' in the Maram dialect. It is a prominent area in the village which is known for its gigantic sizes of menhirs. Menhirs in the region form a large stone avenue (Figure 1). The area covered by this stone avenue is about 0.60 hectares. It is located on the eastern side of the village close to the hill slope.

In other words, it is located on the left side of the present entrance of the village located adjacently to the Maram-Peren road. However, unfortunately, initially, villagers restricted the survey team to have a total access to this specific area to carry out a full-fledged survey walk. This is because survey work in this area has been closed to all visitors and surveyors for the past two decades by the collective decision of the villagers. This area is today well fenced by barbed wire to restrict any trespasses. The main reason for imposing such a restriction is due to an unfortunate incident of mismanagement of the government's funds to protect this particular area by some groups of the people. This incident of misappropriation of funds infuriated the villagers, and since then they have decided unanimously to restrict any survey work or entry into this specific area. In addition, this area is still considered by the villagers as a unique ancestral site which has a close connection with their ancestors and history of the settlements. With much persuasion from the survey team, the villagers had extended the permission to carry out the survey at a part of the said area. However, counting the number of the stones, carrying out measurement work, and photography of the stones were strictly prohibited. Despite, all these restrictions, the survey team had managed to take a few photographs of the stone monuments with permission. In addition, GPS points of a very few stone monuments were also recorded. It was observed during the survey that the primary element of the stones in the Katak area is sandstone. These massive stones are vertically erected on the soft ground surface. Given the massiveness of the stone structures, it appears that a considerable amount of labour would have required to erect them. The sizes of the majority of menhirs are very tall and large. The majority of them would measure approximately above 300 cm. However, some of them would be tall as much as seven meters. Although there is a large group of menhirs in this specific area, each of the menhir is structurally very different and unique. In the middle area of the stone avenue, there is a stone circle. It was observed that the alignment and orientation of menhirs at this site is not random. The majority of the menhirs are aligned from the east towards the west. The orientations of the stones are mostly from north-south and east-west directions. There is also evidence of channelising of water stream on the ground surface just near to the southern part of the stone avenue. It was observed that unlike the other structural forms of megaliths, menhirs in Katak are all roughly dressed. The stone surfaces are

highly eroded and weathered. This might be due to the long process of exposure to the atmosphere.

Figure 1: Katak stone avenue of Willong Khullen village (Photo: Oinam Premchand Singh)

In addition, the stone surfaces are also are covered with lichens, fungus, and even grasses. It is noteworthy to mention that the stone monuments of this area are least disturbed by the locals. However, apart from the main area where stone monuments are erected, the surrounding area has been largely disrupted by the expansion of settlement and recent road construction activities.

SITE 1 (Figure 5)

Site 1 is the ancestral village gate of the Willong Khullen village. This site has never been documented by any scholar so far. The village gate is primarily built of blocks of sandstone, and the door is made up of a wooden plank. The wooden plank door has engraved marks on it. The gate measures 2.5 meters in height and 1.7 meters in breadth.

According to Mr. John (a local crew member of the survey), the village gate has been repaired more than once by the villagers in the recent years. It is located very close to the Katak stone avenue. It was earlier used as the main entry gate into the village before the construction of the Maram-Peren road. The pathway through this gate is directed towards the terrace field located on the lower slope of the hill. The construction of the Maram-Peren road on the foothill on the eastern side of the village makes the locals rely on the Maram-Peren road today. At present, the passageway and the village gate are hardly used by the villagers. They have relied more on the newly constructed road and other recently built pathways in the village. However, the area just adjacent to the village gate was observed to be highly disturbed due to the expansion of the local settlement.

SITE A1 (Figure 6)

Site A1 is a stone circle. This site has also not been documented by scholars until in this study. It is located near the village passageway. It is located in the front courtyard of a house. It measures 3.3 meters in breadth, 3.6 meters in length, and height of 0.7 meters above the ground surface. Its total area is 10.8 m^2. Its building components include cairn, flat stone, and alluvium soil. The main element of the stone is sandstone. The stone circle resembles quite like a square in its shape and the central portion is filled with soft soil. The central portion of the stone circle is covered with grasses. This stone circle is non-sepulchral in its function. As it is located in close vicinity to the settlement area, the surrounding areas other than the stone circle itself was observed to be disturbed by human activities.

SITE A2 (Figure 7)

Site A2 consists of five flat stones. This site has also not been documented by any of the previous scholars. The primary element of the stones is sandstone. Out of the five flat stones, two of them are associated with small menhirs. Menhirs are erected adjacent to the flat stones. The thickness of these stones varies approximately from 40 cm to 20 cm, 42 cm to 130 cm in length, and 40 cm to 60 cm in breadth. Most of the flat stones on this site were observed to be finely dressed. These flat stones are located close to the village passageway and in the courtyard of a house. The areas around the flat stones are observed to be disrupted by the activities of the locals.

SITE A3 (Figure 8)

Site A3 consists of forty-four flat stones. This site is reported for the first time in this study. At this site, the flat stones are built over the cairns. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. There are forty-four flat stones at this site. This particular site measures a height of 1.3 meters above the ground surface, and a length of 17.4 meters, and breadth of 5 meters. However, measurement of the sizes of each of the flat stone was not possible during the survey as the majority of the flat stones are placed very close to one another. Over a few of the flat stones, cemented memorial stones dated back to recent decades are also erected by the locals. Firewoods are also placed on the side of these flat stones. Though the site is located in front of a house, it was observed that this particular site would have been an important burial site of the villagers in the past. Architecturally, the majority of the surfaces of the flat stones are very roughly dressed. Very few of the flat stones are smoothly dressed.

SITE A4 (Figure 9)

Site A4 consists of a flat stone and cairns. This site was never reported by any of the previous scholars. The flat stone measures a length of 200.7 cm, thickness of 40 cm, and breadth of 70.9 cm. However, cairns were observed to be placed near to the site very recently by the people. So a separate GPS point was not taken specifically for cairns. The primary element of the stones on this site is sandstone. The surfaces of the flat stones were observed to be very smoothly dressed. This site is also located in front of a house. Nonetheless, the surface of a few of the cairns stones is also finely dressed. The marked smoothness of the stone surfaces is most likely due to the activities of the local.

SITE A5 (Figure 10)

Site A5 is the largest stone circle in the village. Similar to Site A1, this stone circle resembles square in shape. However, it is a double storied stone circle. It consists of a smaller stone circle placed on the top of the largest stone circle. It measures a height of four meters above the ground level. The smaller stone circle measures up to 1.2 meters in height, 11.5 meters in length, and 8.7 meters in breadth. Its total area is 100.05 m^2. It is

built by encircling several layers of cairns as foundational stones and on top of it is placed layers of flat stones. The central portion of the stone circle was observed to be filled up with the alluvial soil. The main element of the stone is sandstone. This stone circle is located adjacent to the main village passageway. It is located at the highest elevated area of the village. It was observed that locals regularly come and sit on this stone circle. It also appears that this stone circle was repaired very recently.

SITE A6 (Figure 11)

Site A6 consists of two flat stones. It is reported and documented for the first time in this study. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. Both of the flat stones are smoothly dressed. One of the flat stone is placed over the cairns. These flat stones are located in the courtyard of a house and close to the village passageway. The surrounding area of the stones was observed to be altered by the activities of the local people. Near to this site are also few flat stones appear to be moved and dislocated recently by the locals.

SITE A7 (Figure 12)

Site A7 consists of two menhirs. These menhirs are firstly reported and documented in this study. The smaller menhir measures a height of 1.9 meters, thickness of 0.4 meters, and breadth of 0.9 meters. Whereas the bigger menhir measures 2.5 meters in height, 0.4 meters in thickness, and 1.6 meters in breadth. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. The two menhirs are located near the passageway of the village. Architecturally, the two menhirs are very roughly dressed. The stone surfaces of the two menhirs are covered with fungus, lichen, and mosses. These two menhirs are not located in the courtyard rather they are located near to the main village passageway. Since it is located near the main village passageway the ground surface around the menhirs is noticeably disturbed by the locals.

SITE A9 (Figure 13)

Site A9 consists of eight flat stones and cairns. This site was never reported by any of the previous scholars. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. This site has one of the longest flat stone that measures 3.2 meters in length, and 0.4 meters in thickness, and 1

meter in breadth. In this site, there is also recently built cemented memorial stones. Except for the largest flat stone that is finely dressed, other flat stones which are located on this site are very roughly dressed. The site is located near the village passageway. Its location is also close to the village *morung.*

SITE A10 (Figure 14)

Site A10 consists of two flat stone and a small menhir in between them. This site is also being reported and documented for the first time in this study. It is a sepulchral stone cluster. It appears that the stones of this site have been constructed recently. The primary element of the stone is also sandstone. The stone surfaces are very smoothly dressed. It is located near the village pathways. The site has appeared to be highly disrupted by the activities of the locals.

SITE A11 (Figure 15)

Site A11 comprises of nine flat stones and cairns. This site was never documented or reported by any of the previous scholars. Some of the flat stones on this site are directly placed over the ground surface while others are placed over the layer of cairns. The main element of the stone is sandstone. The thickness of the flat stones varies from 30 cm to 10 cm. The length of the stone, on the other hand, widely varies from 60 cm to 225 cm and breadth varies from 72 cm to 155 cm. This site is located in the courtyard of a house. Therefore, the surrounding ground surface was observed to be highly disturbed by the activities of the locals. The architectural style of the stones on this site is very smoothly dressed.

SITE A12 (Figure 16)

Site A12 consists of nine flat stones and cairns. This site is also reported and documented for the first time in this study. The primary element of the stones is sandstone. On this site, some of the flat stones are placed over the cairns, and some of them are directly placed over the ground surface. The thickness of the flat stones on the site varies from 42 to 9 cm. The site is located in front of a house. Few of the flat stones are smoothly

dressed, whereas some of them are very roughly dressed. The roughly dressed flat stones show a long period of weathering. The site is located in the courtyard of a house.

SITE A13 (Figure 17)

Site A13 is a stone circle. It appears rectangular in shape. This site has never been documented in any of the previous surveys. The stone circle is formed by the flat stones which are placed over the foundational layers of the cairns. The element of the stones is sandstone. The stone circle measures a length of 2.8 meters, height of up to 0.4 meters, and breadth of 8.7 meters. Therefore, its total area is 5.6 m^2. The flat stones on this site are very finely dressed. It is located in the courtyard of a house, so apart from the stones, the area around the sites was observed to be highly disturbed by the activities of the locals.

SITE A15 (Figure 18)

Site A15 is one of the biggest megaliths clusters located in the village. In fact, this site was also not documented by the previous scholars. It is formed by a cluster twenty-two flat stones and cairns. The primary element of the stone of this site is sandstone. On this site, the majority of the flat stones are placed over the cairns. However, very few of the flat stones are also placed just above the ground surface. Some of the flat stones are very thick and measures up to 84 cm. While very few of the flat stones are smoothly dressed, the majority of them are very roughly dressed. This site is located close to the village passageway, therefore, the site was observed to be disturbed by the locals.

SITE A16 (Figure 19)

Site A16 consists of two menhirs and cairns. This site has been reported and firstly documented in this study. The primary element of the stone of this site is sandstone. The larger menhir measures a height of 2.5 meters, thickness of 0.3 meters, and breadth of 0.2 meters. The smaller menhir, on the other hand, measures a height of 1.5 meters, and breadth of 0.4 meters, and thickness of 0.9 meters. The site is located near the village passageway. Architecturally, these two menhirs are very roughly dressed. The surfaces of the stones indicate that they have withstood weathering for a long period of time. This is

because the stone surfaces are covered with lichen, fungus, and mosses. It is also located near the village pathway. Similar to other sites, this site was observed to be disturbed by the activities of locals. On the surface of the menhirs, Roman letters have been written and a cemented cross was observed to be leaned on the stone monument.

SITE A17 (Figure 20)

Site A17 is a stone circle. It is similar to the stone circle A5. It resembles square in shape. It is the second largest stone circle in the village. It measures 10 meters in length, 8.1 meters in breadth, and a maximum height of 4 meters above the ground surface. It shares features with the stone circle of Site A5 in the sense that it is laid upon cairns and flat stones. However, cairns are placed as the foundational layer of the stone circle. The main elements of the stone is sandstone. It is a double storied stone circle. The upper storied of the stone circle has a length of 8.7 meters, a breath of 7 meters and a height of 1.21 meters above the ground stone circle. Site A17 is also located near the village passageway. It is located in an elevated area of the village.

SITE A18 (Figure 21)

Site A18 is a stone circle. It is firstly reported and documented in this study. It resembles a rectangle in shape. It measures 7 meters in length, 1.3 meters in height, and 3.2 meters in breadth. Its total area is 22.4 m^2. It is formed by the cairns, flat stones, and alluvium soil. However, the element of the stones is sandstone. Above this stone circle, there is also a memorial stone placed very recently by the people. The circle is mainly formed by the encirclement of the flat stones and cairns. And the middle portion is filled with soft soil. Site A18 is covered with grasses. Few of the flat stones are smoothly dressed, and only some of them are very roughly dressed. It is located near the footpath in the village.

SITE A19 (Figure 22)

Site A19 consists of seven flat stones and cairns. This site has never been reported or documented in any of the previous surveys conducted in the village. The primary element of the flat stones is sandstone. Like in other sites, the flat stones on this site are also placed over the layer of the cairns. The thickness of the flat stones on this site varies from

50 cm to 12 cm while the length varies from 143 cm to 234 cm, and the breadth varies from 63 cm to 109 cm. Some of the stones are very smoothly dressed, and very few of them indicates prolonged weathering. Like in many other sites, the flat stones are placed above the cairns. The architectural style of the flat stones is very smoothly dressed. They are all rectangular in shape. The site is located near the village passageway. Therefore, the surrounding areas were observed to be highly disturbed by the locals.

Figure 2: The measurement work of a flat stone of Site A19 during the field survey.

SITE A20 (Figure 23)

Site A20 consists of only four flat stones. It is firstly reported and documented in this study. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. These flat stones are directly placed above the ground surface and are not associated with cairns. The stones are all rectangular in shape. The thickness of the stones varies from 23 cm to 38 cm, length from 120 cm to 141 cm, and breadth from 68 cm to 105 cm. The flat stones are finely dressed.

SITE A21 (Figure 24)

Site A21 consists of only cairns. It has not been documented in any of the previous surveys in this village. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. It is also located near the village passageway and in front of the courtyard of a house. The area around these stone monuments was observed to be highly disturbed by the activities of the locals.

SITE A22 (Figure 25)

Site A22 consists of three flat stones. This site is firstly reported and documented in this study. One of the flat stone is placed over the cairns, and the remaining two flat stones are placed just directly above the ground surface. The main element of the stone is sandstones. All the stones are in a rectangular shape. The thickness of the three stones varies from 12 cm to 40 cm and the length from 138 cm to 182 cm and the breadth from 61 cm to 107 cm. The surface of the flat stones is very finely dressed. This site is located in front of a house. Therefore, the surrounding ground surface was appeared to be highly disturbed.

SITE A23 (Figure 26)

Site A23 consists of six flat stones and cairns. This site was also neither documented nor reported in any of the previous surveys in the village. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. The majority of the flat stones are placed over the cairns. The thickness of the stones varies from 35 cm to 45 cm, and the length of the flat stones varies from 200 cm to 232 cm. The site was observed to be highly disturbed by recent construction of a water tank by the villagers. It is located in the courtyard of a house. The surfaces of the stones are observed to be very smoothly dressed. The stones are also rectangular in shape.

SITE A24 (Figure 27)

Site A24 is a menhir. It is firstly reported and documented in this study. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. It has a height of 2.3 meters, a thickness of 0.15 meter, and breadth of 1 meter. The stone surface is very roughly dressed and it is covered with lichens and fungus. Therefore, the colour features of the stone surface give an impression of a black colour. The surface soil surrounding the menhir was observed to be heavily removed off by the locals for the construction of the community ground.

SITE A25 (Figure 28)

Site A25 consists of four flat stones and cairns. This site was also neither documented nor reported in any of the previous surveys. The primary element of the flat stones is sandstone. The flat stones on the site are all rectangular in shape. The flat stone on this site measures the thickness that varies from 20.2 cm to 30.5 cm, length from 132 cm to 212 cm, and breadth from 65 cm to 84 cm. It is located in front of a house. The flat stones in general consist of roughly dressed and smoothly dressed sandstones.

SITE A26 (Figure 29)

Site A26 consists of six flat stones and cairns. This site is firstly reported and documented in this study. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. All the flat stones of this site are rectangular in shape. The flat stones are placed above the ground surface. They are also very smoothly dressed. The thickness of the flat stones varies from 28 cm to 41 cm, and the length varies from 139 cm to 215 cm and width varies from 58 cm to 91 cm. The site is located near to the courtyard of a house. Therefore, apart from these stones, all other surrounding areas in this site are highly disturbed by the activities of the locals.

SITE A27 (Figure 30)

Site A27 is a stone circle. This stone circle was never reported or documented in any of the previous research surveys undertaken in the village. It has a length of 2.4 meters, a width of 1.8 meters, and a height of 0.8 meters. Therefore, the area occupied by the stone circle is 3.36 m^2. Though it appears rectangular in shape, it is a stone circle. As in the case of other stone circles, the flat stones on this stone circle are also placed just above the cairns. Few of the flat stones are rectangular in shape and are very finely dressed. The primary element of the stone of this stone circle is also sandstone.

SITE A28 (Figure 31)

Site A28 consists of two menhirs, cairn, and a flat stone. This stone cluster is firstly reported and documented in this study. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. The larger menhir was observed to be very roughly dressed. It measures a height of 140 cm, thickness of 16 cm, and breadth of 180 cm. The smaller menhir, on the other hand, measures a height of 95 cm, breadth of 12 cm, and thickness of 40 cm. The flat stones are

rectangular in shape. They are neatly dressed stones. It measures a thickness of 34 cm, breadth of 91 cm, and 186 cm respectively.

SITE A29 (Figure 32)

Site A29 consists of a flat stone and a menhir. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. The Menhir measures a height of 141 cm, thickness of 20.2 cm, and breadth of 90 cm. The site is located near the village pathway. The flat stone, on the other hand, is smoothly dressed, but it is not rectangular in shape. It is circular in its shape, therefore, it was difficult during the survey to measure its actual length and breadth. But it measures about 23 cm in thickness.

SITE A30 (Figure 33)

Site A30 is a stone circle. This stone circle is also firstly reported and documented in this chapter. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. It measures a length of 4.1 meters, a width of 3.4 meters, and height of 0.9 meters. Similar to other stone circles, the flat stones in this stone circle are placed over the cairns at this site. The central area of the stone circle is filled with alluvium soil. On the top of the stone circle, there is a rectangular flat stone. Flowers are planted by the villagers on the top of this stone circle.

SITE A31 (Figure 34)

Site A31 is formed by the cairns and three flat stones. It is firstly reported and documented in this study. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. The flat stone surface is very smoothly dressed. It is located in front of a house. The thickness of the stones varies from 26 cm to 40 cm. And the length of the stone circle varies from 92 cm to 124 cm. The stones are not rectangular in shape so it was difficult to measure the width during the survey.

SITE A32 (Figure 35)

Site A32 is a stone circle. It was neither documented nor reported in any of the previous research work in the village. It is formed by cairns and flat stones. The element of the stone is sandstone. The flat stones are placed over the layers of the foundational cairns.

The central portion of the stone circle is filled up with soft soils. It measures a length of 3.2 meters, breadth of 2.5 meters, and height of 1 meter above the ground. Its total area is 8 m². Next to the stone circle is a huge rectangular flat stone. This rectangular flat stone measures 56 cm of thickness, breadth of 70 cm, and length of about 150 cm.

SITE A33 (Figure 36)

Site A33 is the third largest stone circle in the village. It measures a length of 9 meters, height of 5 meters above the ground surface. The width of the stone circle measures 8.3 meters. Its total area is 74.7 m². The stone circle is located in the elevated portion of the village area. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. There is also a menhir mounted on the stone circle.

SITE A37 (Figure 37)

Site A37 is a menhir. This menhir has never been documented or reported in any of the previous surveys in the village. It measures a height of 200 cm, thickness of 15 cm, and breadth of 100 cm. The area around this menhir is extremely disturbed by the activities of the locals. The element of the stone is also sandstone.

SITE A38 (Figure 38)

Site A38 is a stone circle. This stone circle is firstly reported and documented here in this case study. A rectangular flat stone is placed next to the stone circle over a layer of cairns. The central portion of the stone circle is filled with alluvium soil. It measures a length of 2 meters, height of up to 0.6 meters, and breadth of 2.5 meters. There is also a rectangular flat stone which is placed adjacently to the stone circle. This rectangular flat stone measures a thickness of 2.5 cm, breadth of 96 cm, and length of 167 cm. This flat stone is smoothly dressed. The main element of the stone of this site is sandstone.

SITE A40 (Figure 39)

Site A40 is a stone circle. This stone circle was never reported in any of the previous surveys. Structurally, it is similar to the other stone circles in the village. It measures a length of 4.5 meters, height of up to 0.7 meters above the ground surface, and breadth of

2.6 meters. The main element of the stone is sandstone. The stone circle is located near the village passageway and in the courtyard of a house. The site was observed to be highly disrupted by the activities of the locals.

Site A41 (Figure 40)

Site A41 is a stone circle. This site has never been reported by any of the previous scholars. In terms of the structure, it is similar to the other stone circles which are found in the village. It has a length of 4.5 meters, breadth of 2.6 meters, height of 0.7 meters above the ground level. It has a total area of 11.7 m^2. This stone circle is located near the village passageway and in the courtyard of a house. The site is equally observed to be highly disturbed by the activities of the locals.

SITE A42 (Figure 41)

Site A42 is a stone circle. This stone circle is firstly reported and documented in this survey. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. This stone circle is built in a similar architectural style as the other stone circles in the village. It measures 3.4 meters in length, height of up to 1 meter above the ground surface, and width of 3 meters. Therefore, its total area is 10.2 m^2. It is also located near the village passageway.

SITE A43 (Figure 42)

Site A43 consists of nine flat stones and cairns. It is firstly reported and documented here in this study. The main element of the stone is sandstone. The majority of the flat stones are placed directly over the ground surface. The majority of the flat stones on this site are very smoothly dressed. Like the other sites, the surrounding area of the site is observed to have been widely disturbed by the activities of the locals.

SITE A44 (Figure 43)

Site A44 consists of the cairns and ten flat stones. This site was not discovered in any of the previous research in the village. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. The site is also located in front of a house. The flat stones are placed over the layers of the cairn. But very few of the flat stones are directly placed just above the ground surface.

Some of the flat stones are observed to very smoothly dressed. The site is also observed to be disturbed by the activities of the locals. Firewoods are also observed to have placed on the side of the flat stones.

SITE A45 (Figure 44)

Site A45 consists of a flat stone and cairns. This site is firstly reported and documented in this survey. The primary element of the stone is sandstone. The site is located on the side of the courtyard of a house. This site is observed to be highly disturbed by the activities of the locals. In fact in the middle of the site, an electric post has been observed to be recently erected. In addition, the site is located near the village pathway.

MORUNG (Figure 45, 46, and 47)

In the village, there are three ancestral village *morung*. In short, a *morung* is one of the most elaborately decorated houses. In general, it serves as a center for congregation especially for unmarried men and women for educational purposes. It provides an avenue for youths seeking prospective companionship. It also serves as an age-old institutional structure in the Maram society. The importance of *morung*, as an important institution among the Maram, has faded away gradually. One plausible reason being, the conversion of the Maram into Christianity. However, in earlier times, it functioned as a dormitory or clubs especially for male and female bachelors of the village. It was used as a sleeping place for male and female bachelors of the village after attaining certain age groups (see also, Tiba 2006: 53-54). However, it should be noted that there are certain structural differences among *morung* of the different sub-tribes of the Naga, but they all share several similarities in terms of the functions. Youths attended the *morung* to be taught with important lessons of life such as bravery, art of warfare, ethical norms of the society and many others.

TABLE 2

THE DETAILS OF THIRTY-NINE MEGALITHS CLUSTERS

SL. NO.	SITE	MEGALITHS FORMS				TOTAL
		MENHIR	CAIRN	FLAT STONE	STONE CIRCLE	
1	A1	0	0	0	1	1
2	A2	0	0	5	0	5
3	A3	0	0	44	0	44
4	A4	0	0	1	0	1
5	A5	0	0	0	1	1
6	A6	0	0	2	0	2
7	A7	2	0	0	0	2
8	A9	0	1	8	0	9
9	A10	0	1	2	0	3
10	A11	0	1	9	0	10
11	A12	0	1	9	0	10
12	A13	0	0	0	1	1
13	A15	0	2	22	0	24
14	A16	2	1	0	0	3
15	A17	0	0	0	1	1
16	A18	0	0	0	1	1
17	A19	0	1	7	0	8
18	A20	0	0	4	0	4

19	A21	0	1	0	0	1
20	A22	0	0	3	0	3
21	A23	0	1	6	0	7
22	A24	1	0	0	0	1
23	A25	0	1	4	0	5
24	A26	0	1	6	0	7
25	A27	0	0	0	1	1
26	A28	2	1	1	0	4
27	A29	1	0	1	0	2
28	A30	0	0	0	1	1
29	A31	0	1	3	0	4
30	A32	0	1	0	1	2
31	A33	0	0	0	1	1
32	A37	1	0	0	0	1
33	A38	0	0	1	1	2
34	A40	0	0	0	1	1
35	A41	0	0	0	1	1
36	A42	0	0	1	1	2
37	A43	0	1	9	0	10
38	A44	0	1	10	0	11
39	A45	0	1	1	0	2
					Total	199

Source: Personal Fieldwork

TABLE 3

THE DETAILS OF THIRTEEN STONE CIRCLES

SL.NO	SITE	LENGTH (L) (m)	HEIGHT (H) (m)	BREATH (B) (m)	AREA (L×B) (m^2)	Volume (L×B×max H) (m^3)
1	A1	3.3	up to 0.7	3.6	11.88	8.316
2	A5	11.5	" 4.1	8.7	100.5	410.205
3	A13	2.8	" 0.4	2	5.6	2.24
4	A17	10	" 4	8.1	81	324
5	A18	7	" 1.3	3.2	22.4	29.12
6	A27	2.4	" 0.8	1.4	3.36	0.8
7	A30	4.1	" 0.9	3.4	13.94	0.9
8	A32	3.2	" 1	2.5	8	8
9	A33	9	" 3	8.3	74.7	224.1
10	A38	2	" 0.6	2.5	5	3
11	A40	4.5	" 0.7	2.6	11.7	8.19
12	A41	4.5	" 0.7	2.6	11.7	8.19
13	A42	3.4	" 1	2.9	9.86	9.86

Source: Personal Fieldwork

TABLE 4

THE DETAILS OF MENHIRS (WITHOUT MENHIRS OF KATAK REGION)

SL.NO	SITE	HEIGHT (cm)	THICKNESS (cm)	BREATH (cm)
1	A7 (i)	250	40	160
	(ii)	190.6	40	90
2	A16 (i)	250	30	110.6
	(ii)	150	40	90
3	A24	230	15	100
4	A28 (i)	95	12	40
	(ii)	140	16	180
5	A29	141	20.2	90
6	A37	200	15	100

Source: Personal Fieldwork

TABLE 5

THE DETAILS OF MENHIRS AT KATAK AREA

SL NO.	Menhirs	Height (cm)	Thickness (cm)	Breaths (cm)
1	Highest Menhir	472	30.5	244
2	Smallest menhir	152.5	30.5	61
3	Broadest menhir	310	41.9	452.4
4	Menhir with hollow groove	276	52.4	200.8
5	Menhir with two hole mark	326.5	38	257.9

Source: Potsangbam Binodini Devi (2011:149)

TABLE 6

THE DETAILS OF MEGALITHS AND ANCESTRAL STRUCTURES WITH GPS POINTS

Sl. No	Site	Forms	Latitude (X)	Longitude (Y)
1	1	Village gate	25˚28'14.23" N	93˚58'19.70" E
2	A1	Stone circle	25˚28'15.00" N	93˚58'18.96" E
3	A2	1. Flat stone	25˚28'14.82" N	93˚58'19.32" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'14.85" N	93˚58'19.26" E
		3. Flat stone	25˚28'14.84" N	93˚58'19.34" E
		4. Flat stone	25˚28'14.88" N	93˚58'19.34" E
		5. Flat stone	25˚28'14.86" N	93˚58'19.33" E
4	A3	1. Flat stone	25˚28'15.13" N	93˚58'18.37" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'15.15" N	93˚58'18.31" E
		3. Flat stone	25˚28'15.16" N	93˚58'18.28" E
		4. Flat stone	25˚28'15.17" N	93˚58'18.25" E
		5. Flat stone	25˚28'15.19" N	93˚58'18.22" E
		6. Flat stone	25˚28'15.20" N	93˚58'18.15" E
		7. Flat stone	25˚28'15.21" N	93˚58'18.12" E
		8. Flat stone	25˚28'15.23" N	93˚58'18.08" E
		9. Flat stone	25˚28'15.24" N	93˚58'18.03" E
		10. Flat stone	25˚28'15.26" N	93˚58'17.99" E
		11. Flat stone	25˚28'15.26" N	93˚58'17.97" E
		12. Flat stone	25˚28'15.27" N	93˚58'17.94" E
		13. Flat stone	25˚28'15.29" N	93˚58'17.92" E
		14. Flat stone	25˚28'15.29" N	93˚58'17.89" E
		15. Flat stone	25˚28'15.29" N	93˚58'17.85" E
		16. Flat stone	25˚28'15.30" N	93˚58'17.82" E
		17. Flat stone	25˚28'15.32" N	93˚58'17.78" E
		18. Flat stone	25˚28'15.34" N	93˚58'17.75" E
		19. Flat stone	25˚28'15.37" N	93˚58'17.76" E
		20. Flat stone	25˚28'15.36" N	93˚58'17.82" E
		21. Flat stone	25˚28'15.35" N	93˚58'17.85" E

		22. Flat stone	25˚28'15.34" N	93˚58'17.89" E
		23. Flat stone	25˚28'15.33" N	93˚58'17.91" E
		24. Flat stone	25˚28'15.31" N	93˚58'17.95" E
		25. Flat stone	25˚28'15.30" N	93˚58'17.97" E
		26. Flat stone	25˚28'15.29" N	93˚58'18.01" E
		27. Flat stone	25˚28'15.27" N	93˚58'18.06" E
		28. Flat stone	25˚28'15.27" N	93˚58'18.09" E
		29. Flat stone	25˚28'15.26" N	93˚58'18.12" E
		30. Flat stone	25˚28'15.28" N	93˚58'18.16" E
		31. Flat stone	25˚28'15.27" N	93˚58'18.20" E
		32. Flat stone	25˚28'15.25" N	93˚58'18.22" E
		33. Flat stone	25˚28'15.23" N	93˚58'18.25" E
		34. Flat stone	25˚28'15.21" N	93˚58'18.27" E
		35. Flat stone	25˚28'15.21" N	93˚58'18.23" E
		36. Flat stone	25˚28'15.25" N	93˚58'18.28" E
		37. Flat stone	25˚28'15.27" N	93˚58'18.25" E
		38. Flat stone	25˚28'15.31" N	93˚58'18.18" E
		39. Flat stone	25˚28'15.31" N	93˚58'18.14" E
		40. Flat stone	25˚28'15.33" N	93˚58'18.09" E
		41. Flat stone	25˚28'15.36" N	93˚58'18.04" E
		42. Flat stone	25˚28'15.39" N	93˚58'17.98" E
		43. Flat stone	25˚28'15.40" N	93˚58'17.93" E
		44. Flat stone	25˚28'15.41" N	93˚58'17.85" E
5	A4	Flat stone	25˚28'15.84" N	93˚58'17.46" E
6	A5	Stone circle	25˚28'15.54" N	93˚58'17.16" E
7	A7	1. Menhir	25˚28'15.54" N	93˚58'17.22" E
		2. Menhir	25˚28'15.53" N	93˚58'17.21" E
8	Morung	Village Morung	25˚28'15.96" N	93˚58'16.92" E
9	A9	1. Flat stone	25˚28'15.97" N	93˚58'16.44" E
		2. Cairn	25˚28'15.91" N	93˚58'16.48" E
		3. Flat stone	25˚28'15.81" N	93˚58'16.60" E
		4. Flat stone	25˚28'15.79" N	93˚58'16.68" E
		5. Flat stone	25˚28'15.77" N	93˚58'16.68" E
		6. Flat stone	25˚28'15.75" N	93˚58'16.73" E
		7. Flat stone	25˚28'15.80" N	93˚58'16.78" E

		8. Flat stone	25˚28'15.81" N	93˚58'16.81" E
		9. Flat stone	25˚28'15.82" N	93˚58'16.75" E
10	A10	1. Flat stone	25˚28'16.02" N	93˚58'16.14" E
		2. Cairn	25˚28'16.01" N	93˚58'16.15" E
		3. Flat stone	25˚28'16.02" N	93˚58'16.17" E
11	A11	1. Flat stone	25˚28'15.66" N	93˚58'15.60" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'15.62" N	93˚58'15.57" E
		3. Flat stone	25˚28'15.64" N	93˚58'15.46" E
		4. Flat stone	25˚28'15.64" N	93˚58'15.56" E
		5. Flat stone	25˚28'15.59" N	93˚58'15.57" E
		6. Flat stone	25˚28'15.56" N	93˚58'15.56" E
		7. Flat stone	25˚28'15.47" N	93˚58'15.53" E
		8. Flat stone	25˚28'15.45" N	93˚58'15.49" E
		9. Flat stone	25˚28'15.39" N	93˚58'15.50" E
		10. Cairns	25˚28'15.37" N	93˚58'15.49" E
12	A12	1. Flat stone	25˚28'15.15" N	93˚58'15.52" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'15.26" N	93˚58'15.66" E
		3. Flat stone	25˚28'15.20" N	93˚58'15.69" E
		4. Flat stone	25˚28'15.20" N	93˚58'15.49" E
		5. Cairn	25˚28'15.13" N	93˚58'15.53" E
		6. Flat stone	25˚28'15.16" N	93˚58'15.48" E
		7. Flat stone	25˚28'15.27" N	93˚58'15.55" E
		8. Flat stone	25˚28'15.14" N	93˚58'15.62" E
		9. Flat stone	25˚28'15.11" N	93˚58'15.54" E
		10. Flat stone	25˚28'15.05" N	93˚58'15.90" E
13	A13	Stone circle	25˚28'14.82" N	93˚58'16.08" E
14	A15	1. Flat stone	25˚28'16.68" N	93˚58'15.00" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'16.63" N	93˚58'14.95" E
		3. Flat stone	25˚28'16.60" N	93˚58'15.03" E
		4. Flat stone	25˚28'16.53" N	93˚58'14.99" E
		5. Cairn	25˚28'16.84" N	93˚58'15.03" E
		6. Flat stone	25˚28'16.45" N	93˚58'14.94" E
		7. Flat stone	25˚28'16.44" N	93˚58'14.88" E
		8. Flat stone	25˚28'16.41" N	93˚58'14.96" E
		9. Flat stone	25˚28'16.41" N	93˚58'15.04" E

		10. Flat stone	25˚28'16.35" N	93˚58'14.90" E
		11. Flat stone	25˚28'16.34" N	93˚58'14.86" E
		12. Flat stone	25˚28'16.33" N	93˚58'14.90" E
		13. Flat stone	25˚28'16.34" N	93˚58'14.93" E
		14. Flat stone	25˚28'16.35" N	93˚58'14.96" E
		15. Flat stone	25˚28'16.27" N	93˚58'14.97" E
		16. Flat stone	25˚28'16.27" N	93˚58'14.93" E
		17. Flat stone	25˚28'16.29" N	93˚58'14.88" E
		18. Flat stone	25˚28'16.35" N	93˚58'14.82" E
		19. Flat stone	25˚28'16.32" N	93˚58'14.77" E
		20. Flat stone	25˚28'16.32" N	93˚58'14.77" E
		21. Flat stone	25˚28'16.24" N	93˚58'14.82" E
		22. Flat stone	25˚28'16.26" N	93˚58'14.87" E
		23. Cairn	25˚28'16.22" N	93˚58'14.95" E
		24. Flat stone	25˚28'16.25" N	93˚58'15.02" E
15	A16	1. Menhir	25˚28'15.96" N	93˚58'14.40" E
		2. Menhir	25˚28'15.99" N	93˚58'14.39" E
		3. Cairn	25˚28'15.97" N	93˚58'14.45" E
16	A17	Stone circle	25˚28'16.08" N	93˚58'13.92" E
17	A18	Stone circle	25˚28'15.66" N	93˚58'13.20" E
	A19	1. Flat stone	25˚28'15.60" N	93˚58'12.90" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'15.57" N	93˚58'12.86" E
		3. Flat stone	25˚28'15.56" N	93˚58'12.90" E
		4. Cairn	25˚28'15.57" N	93˚58'12.93" E
		5. Flat stone	25˚28'15.58" N	93˚58'12.95" E
		6. Flat stone	25˚28'15.57" N	93˚58'12.90" E
		7. Flat stone	25˚28'15.53" N	93˚58'12.82" E
		8. Flat stone	25˚28'15.52" N	93˚58'12.80" E
18	A20	1. Flat stone	25˚28'15.52" N	93˚58'13.28" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'14.98" N	93˚58'13.24" E
		3. Flat stone	25˚28'14.94" N	93˚58'13.07" E
		4. Flat stone	25˚28'14.97" N	93˚58'13.14" E
19	A21	Cairn	25˚28'15.60" N	93˚58'17.64" E
20	A22	1. Flat stone	25˚28'15.42" N	93˚58'19.82" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'15.39" N	93˚58'19.82" E

		3. Flat stone	25˚28'15.35" N	93˚58'19.81" E
21	A23	1. Flat stone	25˚28'15.36" N	93˚58'17.04" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'15.36" N	93˚58'17.11" E
		3. Cairn	25˚28'15.37" N	93˚58'17.01" E
		4. Flat stone	25˚28'15.37" N	93˚58'17.11" E
		5. Flat stone	25˚28'15.41" N	93˚58'16.96" E
		6. Flat stone	25˚28'15.39" N	93˚58'16.92" E
		7. Flat stone	25˚28'15.340" N	93˚58'16.93" E
22	A24	Menhir	25˚28'15.84" N	93˚58'14.62" E
23	A25	1. Flat stone	25˚28'15.89" N	93˚58'11.71" E
		2. Cairn	25˚28'15.89" N	93˚58'11.68" E
		3. Flat stone	25˚28'15.87" N	93˚58'11.69" E
		4. Flat stone	25˚28'15.90" N	93˚58'11.65" E
		5. Flat stone	25˚28'15.89" N	93˚58'11.67" E
24	A26	1. Flat stone	25˚28'14.70" N	93˚58'11.94" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'14.71" N	93˚58'12.00" E
		3. Cairn	25˚28'14.73" N	93˚58'12.03" E
		4. Flat stone	25˚28'14.67" N	93˚58'11.97" E
		5. Flat stone	25˚28'14.66" N	93˚58'11.93" E
		6. Flat stone	25˚28'14.67" N	93˚58'11.93" E
		7. Flat stone	25˚28'14.67" N	93˚58'11.94" E
25	Morung	Village Morung	25˚28'15.24" N	93˚58'11.04" E
26	A27	Flat stone	25˚28'14.76" N	93˚58'11.25" E
27	A28	1. Flat stone	25˚28'14.58" N	93˚58'9.54" E
		2. Cairn	25˚28'14.55" N	93˚58'9.57" E
		3. Menhir	25˚28'14.49" N	93˚58'9.58" E
		4. Menhir	25˚28'14.57" N	93˚58'9.50" E
28	A 29	1. Menhir	25˚28'14.05" N	93˚58'10.49" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'14.05" N	93˚58'10.55" E
29	A30	Stone circle	25˚28'14.46" N	93˚58'9.18" E
30	A31	1. Flat stone	25˚28'13.86" N	93˚58'9.12" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'13.84" N	93˚58'9.09" E
		3. Cairn	25˚28'13.81" N	93˚58'9.08" E

		4. Flat stone	25˚28'13.83" N	93˚58'9.00" E
31	A32	1. Stone circle	25˚28'14.09" N	93˚58'8.40" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'14.09" N	93˚58'8.30" E
32	A33	Stone circle	25˚28'14.86" N	93˚58'7.98" E
33	A37	Menhir	25˚28'13.41" N	93˚58'7.67" E
34	A38	1. Stone circle	25˚28'14.94" N	93˚58'10.56" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'14.92" N	93˚58'10.58" E
35	Morung	Village Morung	25˚28'16.20" N	93˚58'12.42" E
36	A40	Stone circle	25˚28'17.69" N	93˚58'12.50" E
37	A41	Stone circle	25˚28'17.64" N	93˚58'14.40" E
38	A42	1. Stone circle	25˚28'17.64" N	93˚58'14.88" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'17.56" N	93˚58'14.88" E
39	A43	1. Flat stone	25˚28'14.76" N	93˚58'15.12" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'14.71" N	93˚58'15.12" E
		3. Flat stone	25˚28'14.73" N	93˚58'15.19" E
		4. Flat stone	25˚28'14.77" N	93˚58'15.16" E
		5. Flat stone	25˚28'14.77" N	93˚58'15.04" E
		6. Flat stone	25˚28'14.77" N	93˚58'15.07" E
		7. Flat stone	25˚28'14.73" N	93˚58'15.05" E
		8. Flat stone	25˚28'14.72" N	93˚58'15.07" E
		9. Flat stone	25˚28'14.74" N	93˚58'14.98" E
		10. Cairns	25˚28'14.73" N	93˚58'14.99" E
40	A44	1. Flat stone	25˚28'15.12" N	93˚58'14.70" E
		2. Cairn	25˚28'15.09" N	93˚58'14.69" E
		3. Flat stone	25˚28'15.10" N	93˚58'14.66" E
		4. Flat stone	25˚28'15.10" N	93˚58'14.61" E
		5. Flat stone	25˚28'15.10" N	93˚58'14.60" E
		6. Flat stone	25˚28'15.10" N	93˚58'14.57" E
		7. Flat stone	25˚28'15.08" N	93˚58'14.54" E
		8. Flat stone	25˚28'15.07" N	93˚58'14.53" E
		9. Flat stone	25˚28'15.03" N	93˚58'14.50" E
		10. Flat stone	25˚28'15.02" N	93˚58'14.49" E
		11. Flat stone	25˚28'15.02" N	93˚58'14.50" E
41	A45	1. Cairn	25˚28'17.04" N	93˚58'14.16" E
		2. Flat stone	25˚28'16.99" N	93˚58'14.22" E

42	Katak	1. Menhir	25˚28'12.62" N	93˚58'20.82" E
		2. Menhir	25˚28'12.62" N	93˚58'22.07" E
		3. Menhir	25˚28'12.94" N	93˚58'24.12" E
		4. Menhir	25˚28'12.37" N	93˚58'24.35" E
		5. Menhir	25˚28'12.17" N	93˚58'23.24" E
		6. Menhir	25˚28'12.20" N	93˚58'21.80" E

Source: Personal Fieldwork

3.6 CONTEXTUALISING AND MAPPING OF MEGALITHS AND ANCESTRAL STRUCTURES

The intensive field survey undertaken at Willong Khullen village covered about sixteen hectares in area. The survey managed to structure a detailed documentation of thirty-nine megalith clusters which contains over 150 distinctive forms of megaliths. For the first time, the fieldwork has reported and documented the details of thirty-six megaliths clusters that have never been documented by the previous scholars. The forms of megaliths located in the study area consist of menhir, cairn, flat stone, avenue, and stone circle. But the predominant forms of megaliths are menhirs and flat stones. Apart from the megaliths, ancestral remains, footpath, and settlement pattern of the site was also identified during the survey. However, unfortunately, the majority of the megalith clusters have been largely affected by the activities of the locals who inhabit in and around the stone monuments. One of the primary reasons for the destruction of the stone monuments in the village is to do with the expansion of the local settlement area. According to Mr. John (a local crew of the survey team), locals had in past destroyed few stone monuments for the purpose of construction of houses and roads. In such a process, only the flat stones and cairns were destroyed. But menhirs and stone circles were strictly prohibited to destroy for settlement expansion in the village. Apart from the issue of the settlement expansion, recent development activities in the village have also significantly contributed to the destruction of the megaliths site. The fact is that the installations of the electric posts, in the recent years to electrify the village, have shown an utmost negligence and sense of preservation for the archaeological sites. For instance, electric posts were observed to have erected within the megaliths clusters such as Site A18 and Site A45 (Figure 21 and Figure 44). In addition, it was also observed that on some of the menhirs located near the village pathways, locals have written on the stone surfaces with

the Roman letters. For instance, on a particular menhir which was noted as Site A16 during the fieldwork, Roman scripts have been written on the stone surface and a cemented cross was leaned on it by the locals (Figure 19). Although the majority of surviving stone monuments are still in the original position, it is of no doubt that the surrounding areas have been largely affected by the everyday activities of the locals. As the surrounding areas of stone monuments are largely disturbed by the activities of the locals, it was quite impossible to look for smaller archaeological evidence on the ground surface during fieldwork. It should also be mentioned that it is not only the activities of locals that has caused destruction and deterioration of the stone monuments in the village but the natural process of weathering of stones have equally aided in the process of destruction of several stone monuments. The fact is that majority of the stone monuments in the study area have either cracked or erosive marks on the stone surfaces. This implies that the weathering process on the rock surfaces has an active role in deteriorating the stone monuments. However, fortunately, as all of the stone monuments are located in the original positions they can still be mapped and analysed on the GIS maps.

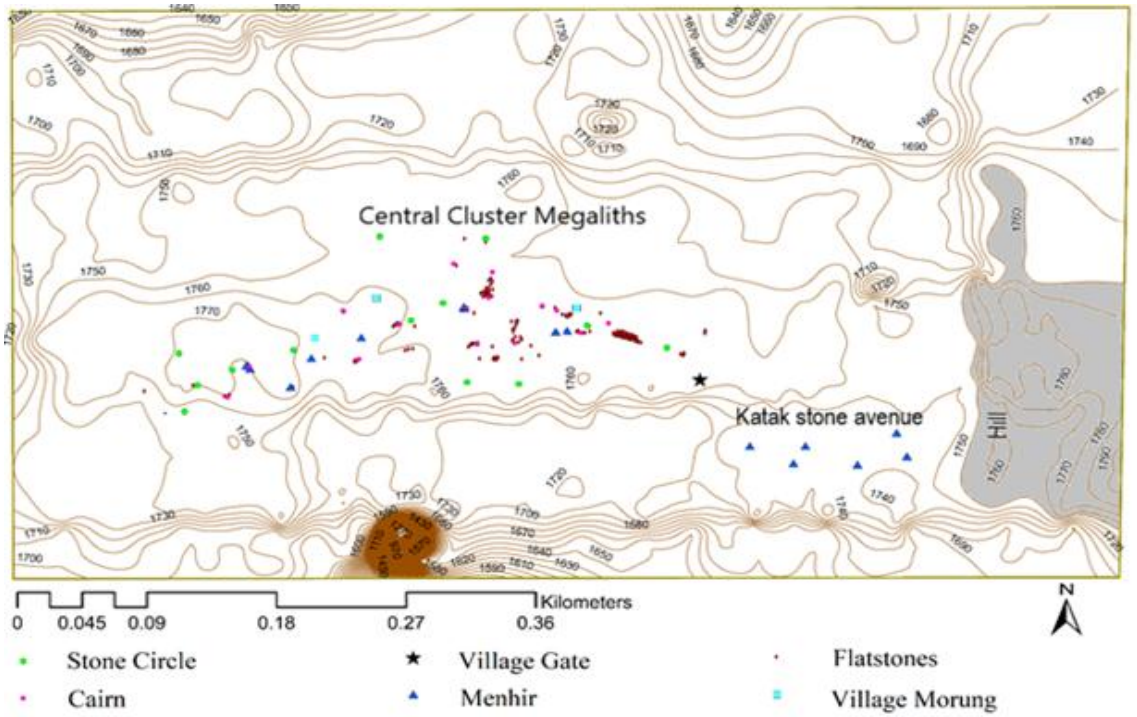
In archaeological studies, maps are regarded as an indispensable analytical tool. For this obvious reason, proper sitemaps will be developed in this chapter to ensure a proper detailed analysis and to identify the distinctive patterning of the stone monuments on the landscape. In this chapter, three types of maps will be used: (i) a Google Earth image, to indicate the details and extent of the settlement pattern of the study area. It will indicate the roads, village pathways, and other landscape features of the study area (Map 2). (ii) GIS maps will be used to indicate the details of the position of over 150 stone monuments, and ancestral structures on the landscape. The main objective is to highlight the topographic and other relief features of the landscape (Map 3). (iii) For the Katak area where carrying out any detailed survey were prohibited by villagers, this study will rely on the distribution map or ‘plan’ of stone monuments as recorded by colonial officer cum ethnographer - J.H. Hutton (Map 4). The main reason for using several sitemaps in this study is to develop a comprehensive picture of the distribution pattern of stone monuments on the landscape. This would further facilitate in assessing the relationship between the landscape features and stone monuments. With the help of the Google Earth map, it is possible to indicate that the area under study is a settlement area with houses built very close to one another. On the Google Earth map, the main pathways in the village are shown to be located on the hilltop. The surrounding area of the settlement of

the village is clearly shown as a forested area (Map 2). On the GIS map, the GPS coordinates of over 150 stone monuments and ancestral structures are mapped to determine the distribution pattern of the stone monuments on the landscape (Map 3). Based on the distribution pattern of the stone monuments on the GIS map, the study area can broadly be classified into two folds: (a) central cluster, and (b) Katak stone avenue or eastern cluster. This classification is based on the fact that the central cluster contains different forms of megaliths, viz. cairns, menhirs, stone circles, flat stones, and ancestral structures. On the other hand, the Katak stone avenue or eastern cluster are composed of only one form of megaliths i.e. menhir (Map 3).

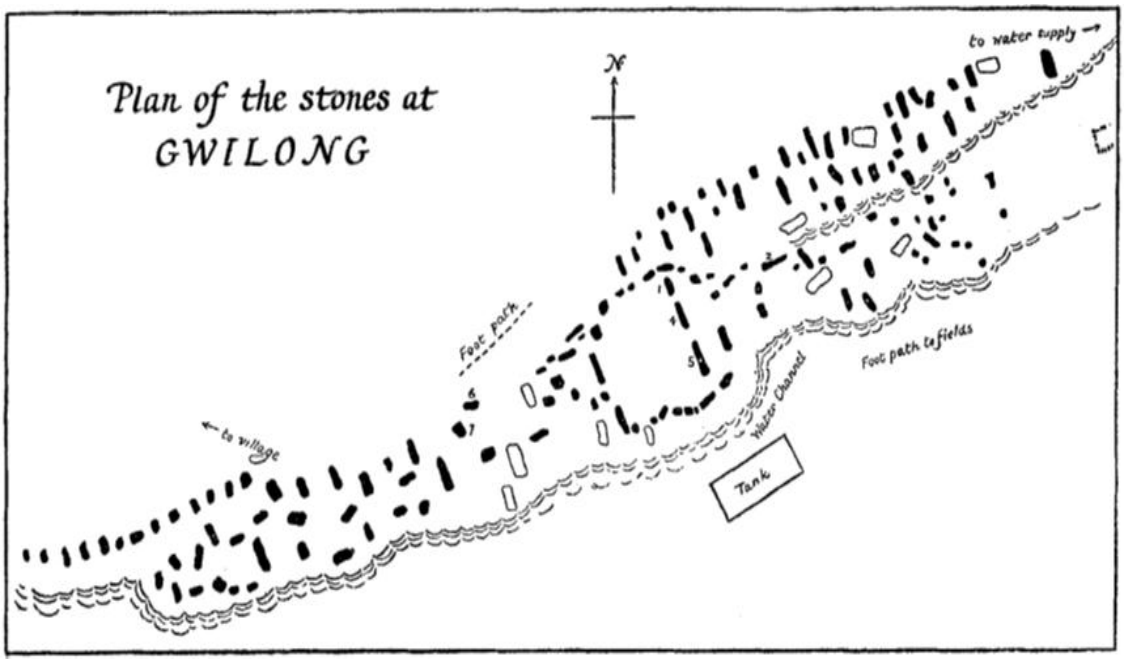
Before assessing the spatial patterning of megaliths on GIS maps, it would be necessary to examine the plan of stone monuments at Katak area of the village as recorded by J.H. Hutton (Map 4). It is noteworthy to mention that Hutton did not provide any detailed account of the construction process of the stone monuments at this village, however, his map of the distribution pattern of megaliths at Katak area provided the much-needed cue of the distribution pattern of the megaliths and so in this regard it can partially help in fulfilling the objective of the spatial analysis of this study. First and foremost, his maps indicate the spatial patterning of the stone monuments alongside with the early landscape feature on the eastern cluster. Therefore, the distribution pattern of the stone monuments on the landscape can easily be determined through a detail examination of his map. There is also the possibility of determining the number of the stone monuments based upon his map. Upon counting the number of the stone monuments, it appears that there were over 180 menhirs at the eastern cluster alone.

Further, his plan clearly indicates the size, alignment, and orientation pattern of stone monuments. So an examination of the sizes of the stone monuments and the distribution pattern shows that larger stone monuments are generally located on the peripheries of the stone avenue (Map 4). On the other hand, smaller size stone monuments are randomly and unevenly distributed on the landscape. The spatial patterning of the stone monuments further shows that the highest concentration of the stone monuments is located on the eastern area of the stone avenue. Moreover, the frequencies of the distribution of the stone monuments somewhat tend to be lesser on the western and central portion of the stone avenue

Map 2: Google Earth image of Willong Khullen village. The red rectangle indicates the Katak stone avenue.



Map 3: Contour map (10 meters contour) shows the spatial pattern of megaliths and ancestral structures in Willong Khullen village. It should, however, be noted that the number of the stones for the Katak stone avenue is not based upon its actual number.



Map 4: J.H. Hutton's plan of the stone avenue at Katak area of Willong Khullen village (Hutton 1929: 333).

The alignment pattern of the stone monuments shows that there is a continuous arrangement of stone monuments following a linear pattern of rows and the general slope on the landscape. The majority of menhirs in this particular area are oriented in the north-south direction. Very few of them are oriented in the east-west direction. It can be observed from his plan that there is a stone circle in the middle portion of the stone avenue in a square shape. Inside of this stone circle, there are three large stone monuments associated with three smaller stone monuments. Some of the stone monuments which are part of this stone circle are oriented in the north-south direction (Map 4). This specific patterning of the stone monuments on the stone circle implies that early entrance to the stone circle would have been only from the northeastern direction as the northeast portion of the stone circle has larger space. Regarding the area of this stone circle, Potsangbam Binodini Devi (2011: 151) noted the area of the stone circle as 1516 × 1014.1 cm and that the space of the stone circle was used by the village youths as wrestling ground in honour of the dead on certain occasions. This area of stone circle indirectly suggests that it would not have been able to accommodate a large number of people when important social events such wrestling of the village youths were held.

Aside from this particular stone circle, the map shows several distinctive distribution patterns on the landscape. The distribution pattern of the stone circle also formed numerous smaller stone circles (Map 4).

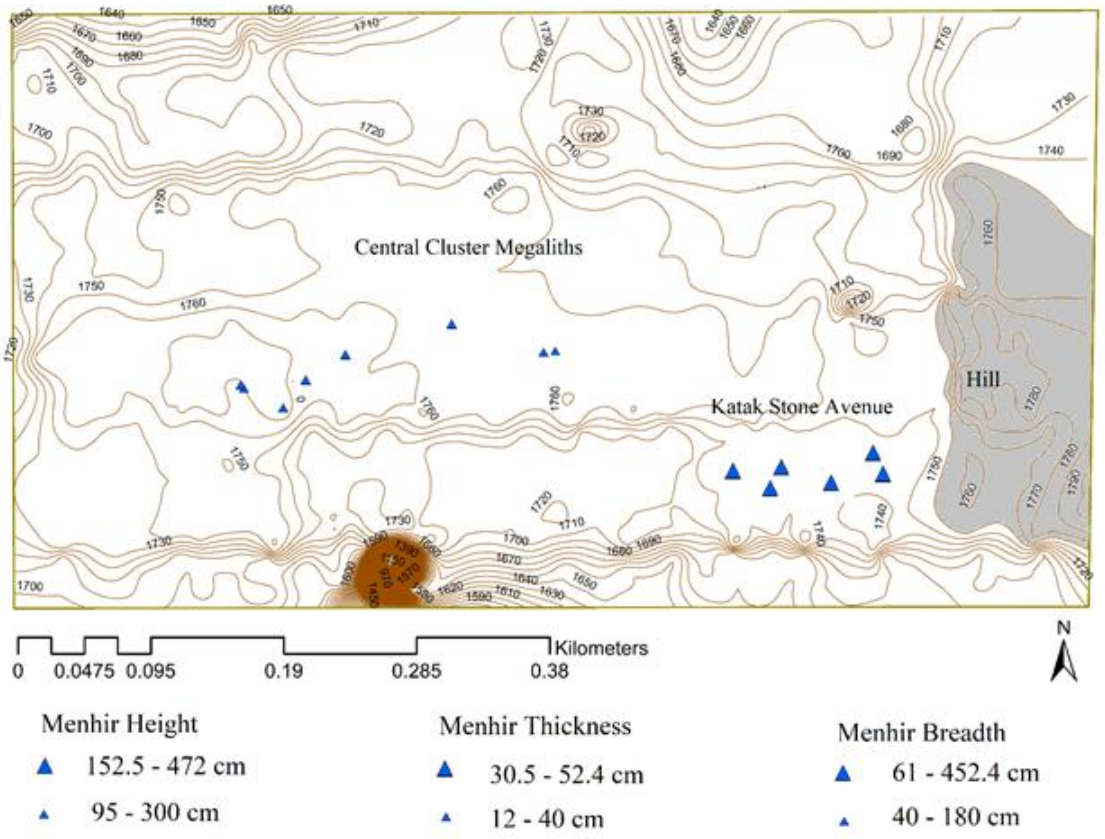
In addition, Hutton's map shows that megaliths were built near the footpaths, approaching the village and to the footpath that was directed towards the terrace paddy field on the lower slope of the landscape. This map clearly indicates that menhirs were built in association with water sources. The association of the water source with menhir is quite unique and specific at this site. Water sources were channelised from the northeast direction towards southwest directions. On top of that, streams were intentionally channelised inside as well as on the peripheral areas of the stone avenue. The association of water or attempt to channelised streams near the stone monuments by the early people can be held as symbolic and specific at this site. It suggests that the stone monuments were not built entirely in isolation but were consciously and intentionally built in correlation with other landscape features. However, the early evidence of channelising of the water in the peripheries of the stone avenue is largely altered at present due to the recent construction of the Maram-Peren road.

Analysis of the overall spatial patterning of the different forms of megaliths shows that there is indeed a clear variability in the distribution on the landscape (Map 3). The majority of the forms of megaliths on the landscape are located on elevated areas of the landscape. To be more precise, the majority of the stone monuments are located at elevation points ranging from 1,750 to 1,775 MASL. On the other hand, only a few stone monuments are located at an elevation point below 1,750 MASL. But in all the cases, menhirs are not located at the lower hill slope of the landscape. Furthermore, there is also another distinctive discernible patterning of megaliths distribution on the landscape. The central cluster of the megaliths is composed of the different forms of the megaliths such as menhir, stone circle, cairn, and flat stone. In sharp contrast to the composition of different forms of megaliths in the central cluster, the eastern cluster consists of only menhirs as primary stone monuments. Moreover, the eastern cluster is located at an elevation point of 1,755 MASL. On the other hand, the majority of the forms of megaliths in the central cluster is located at elevation points ranging from 1,760 to 1,775 MASL. Therefore, the central cluster megaliths are distinctively and relatively located at the

higher elevation points on the landscape. There is a further distinctive pattern of megaliths distribution on the landscape. All of the menhirs in the study area are located near the pathways. Unlike other forms of megaliths, menhirs are not located in the courtyard. In the case of the stone circles very few of them, such as Site A5, A17, and A33 are located near the village pathways. But the majority of stone circles are located in the courtyard. In the case of the flat stones, only Site A15 is located near the village pathways and the majority of flat stones are located only in the courtyard. As mentioned above in the documentation section of this chapter that the majority of cairns are associated with flat stones so they are similarly located in the courtyard.

Further analysis of the sizes of the stone monuments and the patterning shows that there is distinctive variability in the distribution on the landscape. It is noteworthy to mention that the sizes of the megaliths can be crucial for assessing the differential involvement of the labour participants in the production of the megaliths. It is quite apparent from the structural design alone that stone monuments were shaped and quarried from the naturally occurring stones. Therefore, production or creation of it would require a considerable involvement of labour efforts in the process of quarrying as well as in the hauling. This point will be further discussed in the next section.

As far as the fieldwork data is concerned, the central cluster consists of only nine menhirs. In case of the eastern cluster, Potsangbam Binodini Devi (2011: 151) has noted that there are a total of 106 menhirs. The nine menhirs of the central cluster measure a height of 95 cm to 300 cm, thickness of 12 cm to 40 cm, and breadth of 40 cm to 180 cm (Table 4). In sharp contrast, the menhirs on the eastern cluster have heights ranging in between 152.5 cm to 472 cm (Table 5). But, the majority of the menhirs in the eastern cluster are over 250 cm in height. Moreover, the thickness of the menhirs at eastern cluster varies from 30.5 cm to 52.4 cm and breadth from 61 cm to 452.4 cm (Table 5 and Map 5). This implies that larger or heavier menhirs are located only near to the hillside. To further substantiate this point, an analysis of simple linear regression of the number of menhirs and distance from the hillside suggests that 58 % of the variability in the number of menhirs can be explained by the distance from the eastern hill. This implies that the two variables are related to each other with 95% of confidence level ($F=2.812568$, $p < 0.2355525$) (Figure 3).



Map 5. Contour map (10 meters contour) shows the spatial pattern of the size of menhirs at Willong Khullen village. It should be noted that the number of menhirs for the Katak stone avenue is not based upon its actual number.

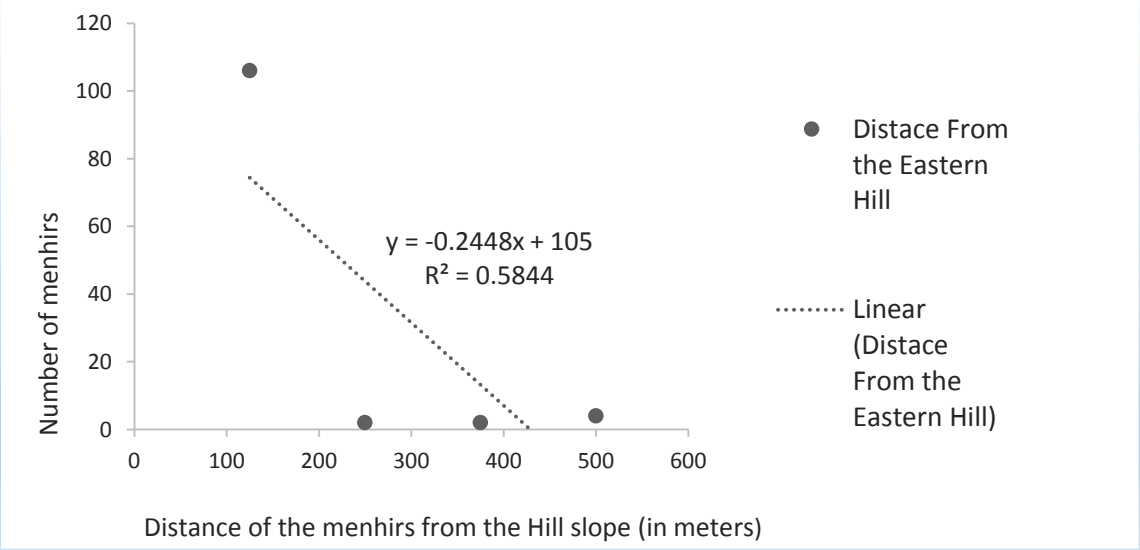


Figure 3: Relationship between the number of menhirs and the distance from the hillside.

Therefore, statistical analysis shows that the distribution pattern of the menhirs on the landscape have a distinctive discernible pattern and that it shares a close relationship with the distance from the eastern hill. The main reason for considering the eastern hill of the study as the main manufacture area or source of all the stones is because sandstones are abundantly and easily available in this area only. In the main settlement area and in other parts of the site, ground surfaces are covered with soft alluvial soil. There is also no rock pool in the inhabited area that can be considered as source of the stone. The landscape features of the village also indicate that it would not be possible to haul the stones up from the lower surrounding hill-slope as it would require enormous labour efforts in dragging the stones up from the lower slope of the hillside to reach the hilltop. This particular pattern of distribution is very significant because erection of large size menhirs would require a considerable amount of manpower or labour participants. Therefore, more collective efforts would be required in case of construction of menhirs as compare to other forms of megaliths such as cairns and flat stones. This is supported by the fact that forms of megaliths such as cairns and flat stones are comparatively smaller in size and so it is an obvious fact that they are also lighter in weight. This implies that they would have been constructed much easier with the involvement of a lesser number of labour participants in quarrying and hauling process. In addition, cairn and flat stones are also placed directly on the ground surface, so it would further reduce the number of labour efforts require for uplifting the stones as it would be necessary in the case of construction of menhirs. In case of cairns it appears that proper quarrying of stone would not have been required. Besides, large labour participants would not be also required in the construction as sizes are very small and in many cases, it appears that one or two people could have easily moved the stone. Therefore, among the forms of megaliths, cairn could have been built with the involvement of few labour participants.

Construction of menhir would require careful quarrying of a large block of stone as they were to be erected vertically on the ground surface to maintain the maximum center of gravity. Quarrying of a large block of the stone would require the involvement of labour participants, and dragging of stone from the manufacturing area to the erected location would again require the involvement of a large number of labour participants. In other words, more collective labour effort would be required at the time of the erection of the

menhirs because the single block of large stone has to be erected vertically on the ground. On top of that, erection of the menhirs vertically above the ground surface would require proper and dip digging of the ground surface. To avoid any free falling on the ground and to remain intact in its ground position for a long period of time would necessitate proper and dip digging in the ground. In the light of this analysis, it is clear that large and taller menhir would require more dip digging on the ground surface to ensure maximum stability. Moreover, uplifting the heavy stone to set it in a vertical position on the ground would again require a large number of labour participants. Therefore, the greater concentration of megaliths only near to the hillside is well indicative of the early builder's attempt to decrease the labour efforts that would be required in the process of hauling the stones away from the hillside.

Further analysis of the sizes of the menhirs also suggests that in the construction process of the menhirs, labour participants were differentially organised. The difference in the sizes of the menhirs indicates that during the construction of each of the menhir the labour efforts were differentially involved. Because construction of the larger menhirs would demand greater amounts of labour efforts say in terms of quarrying, hauling, digging in the ground, and in uplifting the stone. Whereas in the process of construction of the smaller menhirs, it would require a lesser number of the larbour participants (Table 4 and Table 5). The difference in the sizes of the flat stones also directly implies that labour efforts were differentially involved in the construction process.

The orientations of the menhirs in the study area are not in random directions. They are oriented towards specific and particular directions. The majority of the menhirs in the eastern cluster are aligned in a pattern of rows. They are also oriented in a north-south direction. But some of the menhirs which are part of the stone circle are oriented in the east-west direction (Map 4). Similarly, menhirs located in the central cluster such as Site A7, A16, A24, A28, A29, and A37 are also oriented in the similar directions following north-south and east-west direction.

The detailed analysis of the thirteen stone circles, found in the study area shows that there is discernible patterning in the distribution of the stone circle on the landscape. Unlike in

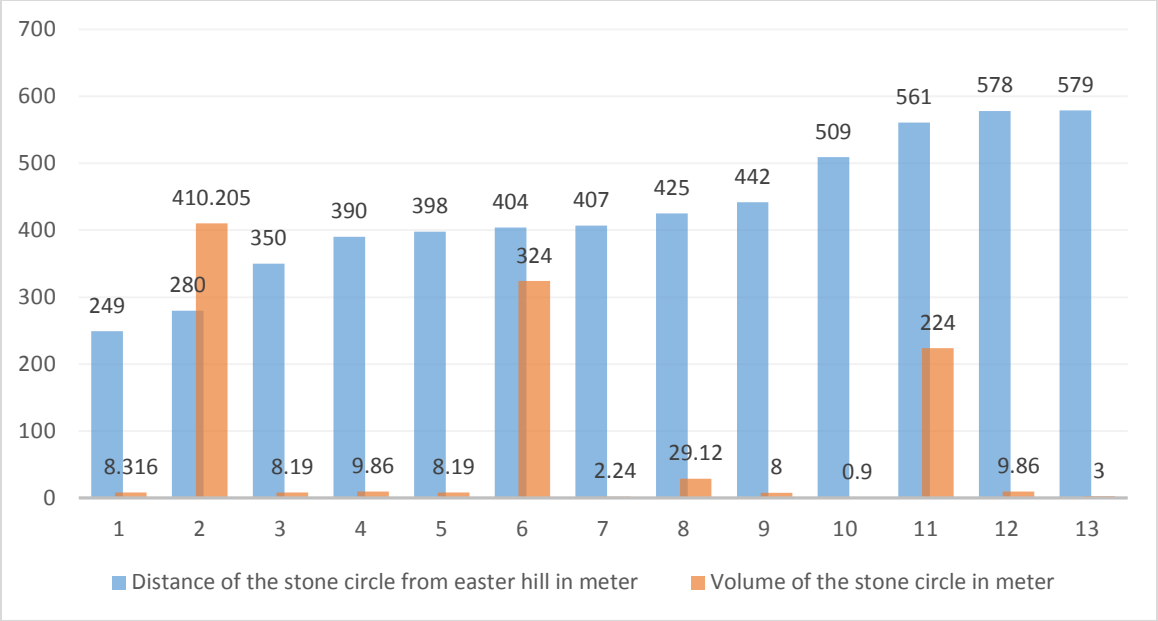
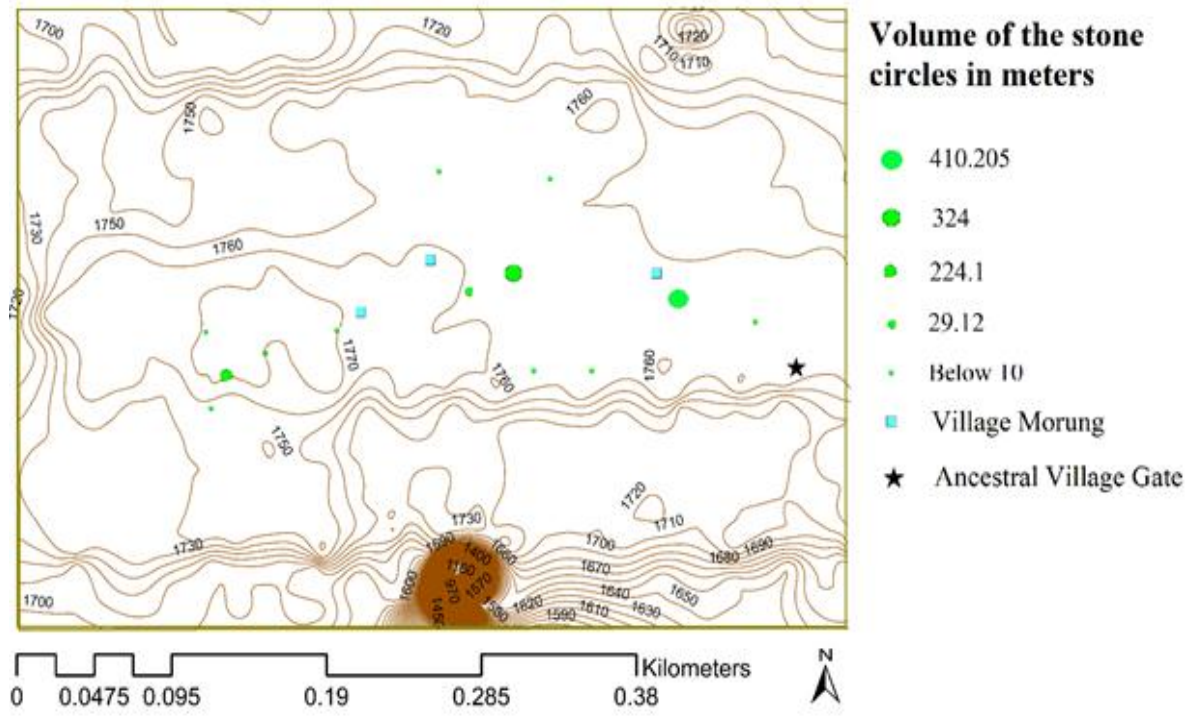


Figure 4: Histogram of the distance of the stone circles from the hill and volume.



Map 6: Map (10 meters contour) shows the spatial pattern of thirteen stone circles in Willong Khullen village.

the case of the menhirs, the distribution pattern of stone circles shows that there is a seemingly weak relationship between the sizes or volumes of the stones and distance from the eastern hillside. This is clearly supported by the statistical analysis of the sizes and volumes of the stone circles and the distance from the eastern hill that there is a weak relation between these two variables (Figure 4). However, stone circles which are close to the eastern hill tend to have larger volume and area. Further analysis of the spatial patterning of the stone circles on the landscape suggests that there is a significant co-relationship between the volumes of stone circles and the elevation points on the landscape (Map 6). Though it is not possible to indicate the village pathways on GIS map, the general location of some of the largest stone circles such as Site A5, A17, A18, and A33 are found only close to the main village passageway which is situated in the most elevated area. Moreover, larger and taller stone circles also suggest that they were likely to be used as an important social space for people in the past. If these stone circles are assumed to be used as gathering place in the past, then it becomes a pertinent question as to how many people had actually lived in this village in the past. Who were those people who were allowed to sit on these stone circles? Was there some sort of hierarchical social structure of the people who could sit or access these stone circles?

Nonetheless, sizes of stone circles could also be used for understanding the differential involvement of labour effort in the construction process. Based upon the sizes, it appears that construction of larger stone circles would have required lots of materials such as cairns, flat stones, and soft soils. This indicates that larger stone circles were constructed with greater involvement of labour efforts, and smaller stone circles were constructed with lesser involvement of labour. Flat stones and cairns are other forms of megaliths found to be widely distributed in the village area. The distribution of flat stones in the village is very unique in the sense that the majority of them are located near the roadside or in the courtyards of houses. Flat stones are also found near the village *morung*. It is clear from these locations that flat stones had symbolic meaning to the people of this village. An examination of the orientation of flat stones shows that the majority of them are oriented in north-south and east-west directions.

3.7 FORMS OF MEGALITHS

As far as forms of megaliths in the village are concerned, stone surfaces and edges of the menhirs are more roughly dressed in comparison to other forms of megaliths. The stone surfaces of the menhirs also show that they have undergone through a long period of weathering process and exposure to the atmosphere. In terms of colour features, menhirs are all black in colour. In addition, stone surfaces of the menhirs are covered with lichen, fungus, and mosses. This is regardless of being located near to the passageway or away from the settlement area. In other words, the colour setting of the menhirs located in the Katak area and in the central cluster have similar colour features.

Flat stones present in the village generally consists of finely dressed and roughly dressed stones. But the majority of flat stones present in the study area are finely dressed and have a regular rectangular shape. However, in the megaliths clusters especially at Site A3 and A15, very few flat stones are roughly dressed. These roughly dressed flat stones have also cracks and erosive marks on the stone surface. The availability of both smoothly dressed rectangular flat stones and roughly dress flat stones in a single megaliths cluster, suggests a continuity in the process of construction of megaliths in the study area. In other words, smoothly dressed megaliths are more likely to have been produced relatively in the recent period when tool technology became more sophisticated and advanced. Whereas roughly dressed flat stones are more likely to have been produced in a much earlier period when quarrying tools and implements were very rudimentary. Regarding the colour features of the stones, very few flat stones of Site A15 are roughly dressed and are also covered with lichens, fungus, and mosses. Majority of flat stones are smoothly dressed and rectangular in shape and are white and tan in colour. However, in the case of the stone circles, it is quite difficult to identify the architectural design as it consists of both very roughly dressed as well as finely dressed flat stones and cairns. The flat stones which are placed on the upper part of the stone circles are very smoothly dressed. These smoothly dressed flat stones are white in colour. This inference implies that the stone circles have been continuously renovated at different point of time by the residents of the village.

3.8 DISCUSSION

From the above documentation, analysis, and detailed mapping of the megaliths and ancestral structures present in Willong Khullen village on maps, several insights can be made on the nature of earlier settlement pattern, forms of early social organisation, and to some extent about a nascent understanding of the relative chronology of the various forms of megaliths. Firstly, the presence of a large number of different forms of megaliths, viz. flat stones, cairns, and stone circles, and ancestral structures such as *morung*, and the village gate on the most elevated (hilltop) area on the landscape have suggested a prolonged period of human occupation. In order words, the hilltop constituted an important area of early cultural landscape in which most of the important cultural activities were executed. On the other hand, the presence of very few forms of megaliths with no others ancestral structures on the lower slope of the hill implies that there has been a short period of human settlement. These findings are further complemented by an examination of the topographic features of the study area. The topographic features of the study area are such that the surrounding hill slopes are steeply raised towards the hilltop. Since the slopes on the surrounding hill are very steep, it would not be a suitable area to build houses and perform other larger cultural activities by people as it would require a larger space. So, by combining the archaeological findings and analysis of the topographic relief features of the study area it is clear that the early settlement pattern in the village would have been on the most elevated hilltop where pertinent material traces are also located. This inference suggests that the settlement present on the lower slope of the hillside is most likely to be of recent extension from the hilltop.

Regarding the forms of the early social organisation at the village, some insights can be drawn from the above mapping and examination of the archaeological data. To start with, the presence of large numbers of megaliths in the study area can be considered as an indicator of the emergence of new forms of social organisation, labour organisation, and technological skills among the people. From an archaeological point of view, construction of large size megaliths would not have been possible without the labour effort of a large number of people and also necessary technological development required

for quarrying of the stones into the desired shapes. This inference if taken somewhat more broadly, could imply that megaliths construction in the village marked an increase in population and also the emergence of a greater degree of social cohesion among the people. Furthermore, the spatial analysis of different sizes of the megaliths on the maps also shows that there is clear variability in terms of the distribution pattern of the different sizes of megaliths and forms on the landscape in the study area. Megaliths which would have required more labour participation in the construction process such as menhirs are present only in close proximity to the eastern hillside whereas other forms of stone structures such as flat stones and cairns which would have required lesser labour participation in construction are present far away from the hillside. The spatial analysis of different sizes of menhirs suggests that there were unequal labour participation in the construction process of the megaliths. The fact is that construction of the larger megaliths would requires more labour participants whereas the construction of the smaller megaliths would requires a lesser number of labour participants. This implies that there was a new form of social organisation in the village in which people had differential abilities to mobilise labour participants. Therefore, it indicates that there were some forms of developed social organisations which could mobilise or command the allegiance of large number of people. The discussion presented above does support the claims of differential abilities of people in mobilising labour participants for the production of the megaliths, to establish social connections to the material and symbolic resources in the context of the study of the megaliths in the Tungabhadra River Basin (Bauer 2015: 115). Given the state of the preliminary archaeological enquiry it is difficult to fully detail the social relationships that were created at earlier period in the study area.

Since all of the menhirs and flat stones are oriented in specific directions i.e. east to west and north to south, there is possibility of these stone monuments to have astronomical significance of the early inhabitants in the study area. However, given the state of the preliminary nature of the field survey, it is very hard to discern explicitly whether these stone monuments were built in association with the astronomical knowledge of the early inhabitants. As far as time frame or date for the beginning of the construction of the megaliths in the study area is concerned, it is also difficult to ascertain exactly from the surface based archaeological survey data. This can be exactly ascertained by carrying out

a systematic excavation and scientific dating of the material findings. However, from the preliminary pedestrian survey and detailed observation of the architectural pattern and colour features of the different forms of megaliths, a nascent understanding can be made on the relative chronology of construction of the megaliths. Among several forms of megaliths present in the village, menhirs are roughly dressed and are covered with lichen and mosses. The stone surfaces are also heavily weathered due to prolonged exposure to the atmosphere. On the other hand, the majority of other forms of megaliths such as the flat stones and the stone circles are smoothly dressed. This implies that menhirs were constructed in the earlier period in the village. Furthermore, the availability of both roughly and finely dressed forms of megaliths suggest that the megaliths have been erected in the different period of time in the village. In fact, the continuity of megaliths construction at the village is also apparent from the presence of smoothly dressed flat stones and cemented memorial stones at few of the megaliths clusters.

Figure 5: Site 1 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 6: Site A1 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 7: Site A2 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 8: Site A3 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 9: Site A4 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 10: Site A5 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 11: Site A6 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 12: Site A7 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 13: Site A9 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 14: Site A10 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 15: Site A11 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 16: Site A12 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 17: Site A13 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 18: Site A15 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 19: Site A16 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 20: Site A17 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 21: Site A18 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 22: Site A19 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 23: Site A20 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 24: Site A21 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 25: Site A22 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 26: Site A23 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 27: Site A24 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 28: Site A25 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 29: Site A26 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 30: Site A27 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 31: Site A28 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 32: Site A29 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 33: Site A30 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 34: Site A31 (Photoby Oinam)

Figure 35: Site A32 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 36: Site A33 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 37: Site A37 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 38: Site A38 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 39: Site A40 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 40: Site A41 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 41: Site A42 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 42: Site A43 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 43: Site A44 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 44: Site A45 (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 45: Morung of Willong Khullen village (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 46: Morung in Willong Khullen village (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 47: Morung in Willong Khullen village (Photo by Oinam)

Figure 48: Willong Khullen village (Photo by Oinam)

CHAPTER IV

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY AT WILLONG KHULLEN VILLAGE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the difficulties faced by archeologists is with regards to the proper interpretation of the material remains. The problem is largely on how and what methods should be employed to comprehend and interpret the material traces. In other words, material remains cannot speak for themselves. Therefore, the question of how and why they were made or what they actually mean finds no easy answers and has been always contested in academic discussion. In this regard, there are two contesting approaches that deal primarily about the nature of the archaeological interpretation. Some groups of scholars argue that archaeological sites are little more than mirrors that reflect the archaeologists and not entirely the past. Whereas another strand of scholars argue that in order to interpret the past better, archaeologists must find ways of making material remains to "speak" in a language that can be understood to archaeologists (Peregrine 2001: 1).

To resolve these issues, archaeologists have in the recent years employed the research design of ethnography as a powerful tool in interpreting material remains. Many archeologists have increasingly conducted ethnographic studies for archaeological reasons. They have suggested a multidisciplinary approach that could combine the knowledge of both these two fields. The advantage of an ethnographic study which is based on the interviewing and observation is that it has the ability to overcome the problem of muted material remains to understand the meanings for the creation of material remains (*ibid*: 2-6). The use of the ethnographic information, therefore, can be helpful as part of a larger archaeological research design to address the arduous questions that archaeological research design alone is not equipped to answer satisfactorily.

As mentioned in the preceding chapter that majority of stone monuments at Willong Khullen village are located within the inhabited area. Therefore it was expected that an ethnographic study could help in addressing how and why megaliths were made and what

they actually mean. In order to highlight the ethnographic research strategy as a useful tool of studies on megaliths, this chapter presents the detail interviews of locals who inhabit the places in and around the stone monuments. In doing so, at first, the chapter provides a detailed ethnographic profile of the Willong Khullen village. Secondly, it provides a succinct account of the traditional socio-political structure, history of settlement in the village, traditional methods of construction of stone monuments viz. rituals, quarrying, and dragging of stone, labour mobilisation, and resource expenditure while undertaking construction of stone monuments. Further, it also examines the social distinctiveness or social benefits that were accrued especially to those individuals who had in the past erected stone monuments. The rationale behind this chapter is to understand the forms of early social organisation in the village which had produced the stone monuments. Lastly, it also attempts to establish a relative time frame as to when the construction of megaliths was started in the village.

4.2 METHODOLOGY

After completion of the archaeological survey at Willong Khullen village, an ethnographic study was simultaneously carried out. Before briefing the methodology, it is noteworthy to mention that undertaking a thorough ethnographic study at the village had been severely constrained by lack of monetary assistance and limited time frame within which the study has to be completed. As mentioned in the preceding chapter that conducting fieldwork in the study area were affected by unexpected incessant rain in term of schedule. As a result, ethnographic study at the village could be carried out for two and half days only. Fortunately, all the inhabitants of the village could speak Meiteilon[4] language apart from their Maram dialect. Therefore, all the interviews and discussion with the locals could be carried out conveniently in Meiteilon language without the need for a translator. Some of the important study technique employed in the study includes interviewing of the village elders, who had in the past been involved in the construction of megaliths. In doing so, local informants were asked with a set of prepared questions on themes, such as -

[4] Meiteilon is the lingua franca official language of the state of Manipur.

i) Present ethnographic profile of the village such as number of households, demography, economy, religion, and social condition of the people.

ii) History of the settlement in the village.

iii) Traditional socio-political structure of the village.

iv) The traditional account of traditional methods of construction of different forms of megaliths such as rituals, quarrying of stones, dragging of stones, expenditure of resource, and feastings.

v) Religion and social practices before the advent of the Christianity.

vi) Continuity and age old practice of stone erection in the village.

In order to test the veracity of the ethnographic information, village elders and youths were taken interviews during the study. The data gathered through the informant's accounts were recorded on a mobile phone during the interview sessions. The transcript of the interview recordings is given in the appendix section of this dissertation. Furthermore, information provided by colonial officers and previous scholars are used in this chapter in view of getting a comprehensive picture of the early tradition of the erection of the stone monuments.

4.3 ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF WILLONG KHULLEN VILLAGE

Willong Khullen village is known as *Makuiluingi* amongst the local inhabitants. According to Mr. Luihing (a local informant), the name of the village 'Willong Khullen' was given by colonial officials. The village is presently populated by Maram people who prefer to call themselves as *Maramei.* They speak Maram dialect. They do not have their own scripts. So people mainly rely on the Roman script in writing. The dialect presently spoken by the locals has a slight variation from the one spoken in Upper Maram[5]. According to the district census report of 2011, the village has a total population figure of 4,276 and 628 households (District Census Report, 2011). There are three tribal clans

[5] Upper Maram area refers to the Maram Khullen village which is also one of the oldest and the biggest Maram inhabited area in the Senapati district of Manipur.

(*Sudung)* in the village, namely - Kapsiilamei, Kangkuinamei, and Hangnamei Houmei. Among these three tribal clans, Kapsiilamei tribal clan is the majority. The tribal clan of Kapsiilamei is again divided further into eleven sub-clans (*Pfutat*), namely - Rangpfunahmei, Boishingnahmei, Raidipfusungnahmei, Sagongkimei Lungdinahmei, Kahukimei, Puilingpuinahmei, Hushangkimei, Napoingnahmei, Namkangtahmei, Lungdisoinahmei. The sub-clan (*Pfutat*) of Kahukimei is the majority of the Kapsiilamei clan.

The Kangkuinamei clan consists of five sub-tribes (*Pfutat*), namely - Dirangnahmei, Kangkuinahmei, Sungngaibatamei, Ranngingnahmei, and Rangtahmei. The Hangnamei Houmei clan is again divided into ten tribal sub-clans *(Pfutat),* namely - Kabangbatahmei, Sambatahmei, Thungingtahmei, Haomarongmei, Haomasangmei, Kemdirangnahmei, Muilungtahmei, Shingtahmei, Shoingtahmei, and Haidoihingtamei.

Agriculture is the main part of the local economy of people in the village. About seventy percent of the population depends on agriculture. Rice is the staple food and in order to cultivate rice, the villagers presently practice Terrace farming on the hill slope and in plain areas near Barak River. However, in the earlier period, the people in this village practiced both Jhum and Terrace cultivation. Since the early period, people in the village has a practice of family ownership of land. Hence, there has been no collective or communal system of ownership of land. As there has been a system of family ownership of land, every family has their own separate land holdings. Till today, people are engaging with hunting as a secondary occupation. So much so that, large-scale seasonal hunting activities are undertaken during January to April by bands of young able-bodied men. No woman or children are allowed to participate in it and animals such as deer, cat, monkey, birds, and others are the usual catch from such activities. Interestingly, hunting activities are carried out near the village area. The villager also practices fishing as a festival in Barak River every year, especially during April and May.

At present, majority of people in the village are followers of the Christian religion. According to informant's accounts, about ninety-seven percent of total populations are followers of the Christian religion and the rest are followers of the *Maidamei* religion.

Maidamei is the early traditional religion of the locals. Followers of this religion mainly worship nature and spirits. Followers of this religion also practice lots of rites and sacrifice as part of this religion. With regards to the Christianity, there are two denominations of the church, namely – the Baptist and the Catholic Church. The number of followers of the Catholic Church outnumbers the Baptist followers. Kapsiilamei clan is the majority followers of the Catholic Church and, the Baptist church mainly draws its followers from Hangnamei Hounamei clan. The followers of the *Maidamei* religion are primarily old age groups of people in the village who have refused to convert to the Christianity.

Some of the important traditional festivals which are still continued in the village include *Yai Thaba, Mgibi, Katokngi,* and others. *Yai Thaba* is one of the biggest annual traditional festivals of the village. It is a community fishing festival. It is carried out usually in the month of April and May for two to three days. As part of this festival, the barks of vines tree are laid upon the stones and beaten up by young able-bodied men. The bark of the vine tree is mixed with a powder extracted from the bark of a tree called *Ushoi* in the local dialect. The solution is then dissolved in the river water which could easily paralyse the fish to float on the water surface for an easy catch. As a part of this traditional festival, men who have participated in the fishing are required to present their womenfolk with fish they have caught from the river. *Mgibi* is another annual traditional festival which is held every year on the 29th of December. On the festival day, every villager would dress in traditional attire and perform traditional dances. As part of this festival, villagers also feast together. *Katokngi* is a sowing festival and it is generally held on the 1st week of July. People feast together, to mark the event of the sowing season for the year.

4.4 TRADITIONAL SOCIO-POLITICAL SYSTEM

Willong Khullen village was traditionally administered by the village council. The village council was headed by village chief which they called it *Sagong.* It is a hereditary post and the elder son always inherited the post of *Sagong*. *Sagong* functions as both religious and secular head of the village. In term of religious affairs, he was assisted by village

priest who is known as *Atingba.* Therefore, at any rites and important event of the village, the presence of *Sagong* was considered necessary as far as the earlier tradition of the village is concerned. In case if he was absent in any of the important event or ceremony, then those events which were conducted in his absence was considered meaningless. In term of secular matters, he was assisted by councilors who were known as *Kapras. Kapras* were selected from clans of the village on the basis of age and seniority. Therefore, it was not a hereditary post. In the village council, *Kapras* represented the tribal clans and speaks for their common interest in the council. Therefore, *Kapras* played an important role in the administration of the village. The village council largely function as judicial, administrative, and executive body of the village. The village council framed all the laws of the village. However, as judicial head of the village, *Sagong* could bypass criminal laws framed by the council. For instance, if a person convicted of any offense went to village chief and begged him to save his life then the village chief has the authority to suspend or commute the punishment of the convicted person and save his/her life. However, such individuals were required to serve the village chief as a housekeeper or helper for a lifetime.

The family is the basic social unit in the village as does consider in every community or society. Each family form, a social unit that functions as a small and separate distinctive economic unit. Their traditional concept of the family was indeed based on a line of the patrilineal system. However, traditionally women were given high respect in the societies. As per traditional practice, children were not allowed to sleep in the house of the parents especially after attaining a certain age. They were made to sleep in the village dormitory until they got married and established a new house. For boys, the dormitory or the youth clubs were known as '*Hangshuki'* and for the girls, it was known as '*Ruluki*'. There was no clear concept of the joint family, therefore after marriage, the new couple are required to build a separate house and establish a new family (see also Taiba 2006: 53-54). But, the youngest son of the family always inherited the house of his parents and bear the responsibilities to look after them when they become old. The clan is the next larger social unit. Each clan consists of several families. It is a belief that clan names are derived from the first ancestors who had settled in the village. The surnames or lineages

of the people in the village are also derived from the name of the clan to which they belong.

4.5 HISTORY OF SETTLEMENT AT WILLONG KHULLEN VILLAGE

According to Mrs. Hiibangi and Mr. Luihing (local informants), the earliest settlement in the village was started about fifteenth generations ago by three brothers who had migrated from the Maram[6] area. The name of the eldest brother was *Ngapoing*, the second was *Rang*, and the youngest was *Boishing*. According to oral accounts, the three brothers had once lived in the Maram area. Unfortunately, at their early age, they lost their mother and after the death of their mother, their father married another woman. Their new stepmother tortured them very badly and tried to kill them. Because of ill treatment by their stepmother, they decided to leave their home and established a new village where they could lead an independent life.

Therefore, they set out searching for new settlement areas in which they encountered the present land of Willong Khullen village. However, before they came to this land it was already marked as future settlement land by people of Yangkhullen[7] village. However, the three brothers were determined to start their new settlement only in this land which was already claimed by people of Yangkhullen village. Therefore, they sorted out a plan to scare off the people of Yangkhullen village who had already marked the land as their future settlement land. As part of their plan, they filled up a large number of leaf cups with rice beer and placed it on trees. They also peered around on trees with their spears as marks to indicate to other people who come searching for new settlement land that a large number of people had already chosen this particular land for their future settlement. When people of Yangkhullen village came back in the land to establish their settlement they witnessed a large number of leaf cups and spears marks on trees. They thought that a large number of people came to the land before them and marked the land as their settlement area. They feared that in case if they establish their new settlement and if those

[6] It is not very clear to the villagers whether 'Maram area' which is mentioned in the oral accounts is exactly referring to Maram Khullen village or other Maram inhabited villages in the Senapati District.

[7] Yangkhullen village is located on the north of Willong Khullen village, about 6 kilometers in distance. It is presently inhabited by another sub-tribe of Naga called Zeliaraong.

large numbers of people who had marked the land as their settlement land return back then there would be a war in which they thought they would inevitably lose as their numbers were less. Therefore, people of the Yangkhullen village revoked their earlier plan for settlement in the land and went away. The three brothers then established their first settlement in the land and it later became Willong Khullen village.

The three brothers established the new settlement on the hilltop and married Maram women. The reason for choosing the hilltop by three brothers was mainly for security reasons. It was to protect and defend the village from any surprise attack from the neighbouring villages and wild animals. In order to ward off intruders, a village gate was built on the hilltop, and ditches were also dug in the surrounding area of the village to form an effective defensive line against any attack from the enemy. Local informants claimed that the three brothers first established the Kapsiilamei tribal clan who is also presently the majority group of people in the village. The present three tribal sub-clans of Kapsiilamei, viz. Rangpfunahmei, Boishingnahmei, and Napoingnahmei are believed to be the direct descendants of the three brothers. It is also the belief of the villagers that the erection of the stone monuments was started just after the three brothers made their first settlement in the village.

4.6 FUNCTIONAL FORMS OF THE MEGALITHS

Potsangbam Binodini Devi (2011: 146) has mentioned a functional type of a stone monument called *'Beitung'* which she recorded in Willong Khullen village. However, local informants claimed that there was no such stone called *'Beitung'* in the village and that the word '*Beitung'* means 'hammer' in Maram dialect. Furthermore, during the ethnographic study, new functional type of the stones have been recorded for the first time that has never been reported in any of the previous studies. Therefore, a fresh classification of the functional types of stone monuments present in the village is deemed to be quite necessary for this study. As far as the functional type of megaliths is concerned, it can be broadly divided into four folds: (i) Memorial or commemorative stones (ii) Burial stones, (iii) Resting or watchtower, and (iv) Holly Stones (Table 7).

TABLE 7: THE DETAILS OF THE FUNCTIONAL TYPE OF STONE MONUMENTS

SL. NO.	LOCAL NAME	FUNCTIONAL TYPE	STRUCTURAL FORM
1	Tiisum	Memorial/commemorative	Menhir
2	Ranii Atu	Resting or Watchtower	Stone circle
3	Arou Atu	Burial Stone	Flat stone with or without cairns
4	Sagatu	Holly Stone	Cairn
5	Tiisum Kamatei	Holly Stone	Menhir
6	Attuchagga Kamatei	Holly Stone	Flat stone

Source: Personal Fieldwork

4.6.1 MEMORIAL OR COMMEMORATIVE STONES

Memorial/commemorative stones are known as *Tiisum* in the village. The literal meaning of the word *'Tiisum'* in Maram dialect is 'erected stone'. In terms of structure, it is a Menhir. According to informant's accounts, erection of this type of stone took place much earlier than the erection of other types of stones. The tradition of the erection of *Tiisum* is no longer continued and locals who are about sixty years of age confirms that they also did not witness erection of this form of stone monuments. According to the early tradition, erection of *Tiisum* was carried out mainly in the name of the individuals to earn a higher social status in the village during their lifetime. It was considered one of the single largest undertakings of the people in the village.

ELIGIBILITY OF AN INDIVIDUAL TO ERECT A TIISUM

Erection of *Tiisum* was regarded as the goal of every person in the village. If a person erected a stone in his name, then he was accorded a higher social status in the village. However, only the rich and wealthy people could erect this type of stone in their name.

This was because erection of this type of stone required a series of feasting and a huge expenditure of resources by the individual who was intending to erect a stone in his/her name. As resource expenditures were very high, only wealthy people could erect this type of stones in the village. Traditionally those people who had a surplus of rice and a large number of cattle were regarded as the wealthiest people in the village. So, it was mainly erected by rich people to indicate their extraordinary wealth to attain a privilege higher status within the society especially during their lifetime. It was also rarely erected by the rich family after the demise of their family members in the form of memorial stones. Irrespective of gender, this types of stones were erected by wealthy people to achieve social distinctiveness in the society. Though female were allowed to erect this type of stone, local tradition has it that it was mostly erected in the name of the male person. It must be noted that few stones were erected in the past in the name of families and clans and therefore it was a practice that has more to do with the status of the individual. Erections of stones in the name of clans or groups were carried out only after a successful victory in the war with neighbouring village. As these stones were mostly erected in the name of individuals, every stone has different names and indeed separate biographies. However, present people in the village are not able to recall all the names of individuals who had in the past erected these stone monuments.

A person who wished to erect a stone in his name had to follow a series of traditional social rules and regulations of the village. Firstly, he was required to seek a formal consent from the chief, councilors, and clan leaders. In doing so he has to invite all of them to his house over a dinner. He would serve them a dinner with meat and rice beer. He would then seek a formal consent from them to erect a stone in his name. If his request was accepted, the chief and councilors would announce the name of the individual in the village and his desire to erect a stone. In case, if there were other individuals who also wish to erect stones in their name in the same year, then the council would make a list of those individuals and their respective turn to perform the event of stone erection. But once the name of the individual was formally accepted and announced by the village council then the individual was not allowed to take back his word. In case if a person was not able to erect a stone after making a formal announcement in the village then such a person would be punished according to the tradition of the village. It

was also believed that a person who made such an attempt and failed to erect a stone in his name would suffer due to the wrath of God. Once the announcement was made to the villager the individual person would select a stone with the help of the village priest. In this regard, colonial officer Hodson (1911: 181) noted that the intending person selected the stone by eating a small wedge from the stone.

After choosing the right stone, the village priest would perform certain rituals to purify the stone. The selected stone would then be covered with clothes or leaves so that no women and children could touch it or see it. Because, it was a general belief that if the selected stones were either seen or touched by the women or children, then there would be problems when people drag the stone. After selecting the stone, the individual person or the merit seeker would observe 'special social sanctions and restriction' which Potsangbam Binodini Devi (2011: 150) noted it as *"genna".* If the performer was a male, he was required to isolate himself and stay away from his wife for a period of a few months or years prior to the event of stone erection. The main reason for this was to avoid any sexual intercourse with his wife which was strictly forbidden by the tradition of the village. If the person had failed to stay away from his wife, then it was a belief that the selected stone would crack and bring bad omen and the intending person, as well as his family, would suffer miserably due to the wrath of God. In addition, the village chief was also forbidden to have sexual intercourse with his wife just before the event of stone erection ceremony. Otherwise, it was a belief that there would be trouble at the time of pulling of stone by the villagers. During the period of isolation, the intending person would pray to God to avoid any undesirable or unfortunate events of death in his family members or in his clan or in his village. He would also pray to avoid natural calamities, viz. earthquakes, thunderstorms, lightning, and others. However, if any such incidents happened just prior to the stone erection event, it would be regarded as a bad omen by the villagers and the ceremony of stone erection would be postponed for few months or even a year. For instance, if a person in the village was dead just before the stone erection ceremony or while in the process of dragging of the stone then the entire ceremony of stone erection would be postponed. If any of these incidents happened then the intending person might have to newly select a stone. During the period of isolation, the intending person was forbidden to consume food such as meat and rice. He would consume only *Zu*

(rice beer) and ginger (Hodson 1911: 181). The intending people were also required to eat separately from other members of the family. Before stone erection ceremony the intending individuals were also forbidden to kill animals and birds.

QUARRYING, HAULING, AND ERECTION PROCESS OF TIISUM

Hauling of the stones was usually carried out in the March and April in the village. On a day fixed by the village council, the selected stone would be dragged by the able-bodied men of the village. Quarrying of the stones, however, were usually carried out prior to the stone dragging event. The specific tools used by the early villager in the quarrying process of the stones remains obscure. According to informant's accounts, iron or other metals were mainly used in the quarrying of stones. Quarrying of stones was carried out in the original location of the natural stones, mostly on the eastern hillside of the village. According to local tradition, stones were to be quarried before the ceremony of dragging of stone and dragging of stones had to be completed within a given stipulated period of time of about five to six days. If dragging of stones were not completed within this specified period of time then the same stone would not be allowed to erect in the village. The event of stone dragging would be led by the village chief *(Sagong),* village councilors *(Kapras),* and village priest *(Atingba).* It was mandatory for the intending person and his wife to be present during the event. But they would not partake in the stone dragging. All the locals who participated in the event would dress in their traditional attire. However, the village chief and intending person would dress separately on this day. The intending person would hold a spear in his hand during the entire process of erection of stone.

Before the ceremony of the stone dragging, some of the villagers would collect creepers from the woods to be used as rope during the process of dragging of stone and in uplifting the stone. They would prepare wooden sledges to drag the stones. The stone to be erected would be placed carefully on the sledge made of big wooden logs. Stone on the sledge was adjusted with the help of wooden levers. Once the stone got placed on the desired position on the wooden sledge, the stone was tied with creepers to the wooden sledge tightly. Hodson (1911: 181) noted that the village priest poured *Zu* (rice beer) on

the stones and cast spells and lose a fowl to mark the start of dragging of the stone. These rituals were carried out so that no difficulty would be faced by villagers while dragging the stone. Once the ritual was completed, villagers would hold the rope made of creepers and dragged the stone. Some people would push the stones while the others would pull to move the stone forward. Interestingly, while dragging the stone, one person would either sit or stand on the stone. It was a belief that this would make the stone much lighter and easier to be dragged by the villager. The person who sits or stands on the stone would shout out -*"Mumeilungle, Tasokaikyii, Suirameg…"* and all the villagers who were engaged in pulling the stone in return would shout out in unison -*"Oije, Oije, Oije…"*. The actual meaning and translation of these words were refused to share by the local informants. When these words were shouted out, it was a belief that the evil spirit would laugh at the villagers who were pulling the stone. As per the traditional beliefs of the locals, when the evil spirit is laughing, the stone dragging was considered to be much easier for the villagers.

According to Mr. Maling (informant), when villagers dragged the stone down from the hillslope, many villagers had lost their lives. In case, if someone was dead during the stone dragging process then it would be considered as a bad omen and erection of the stone would be stopped. Dragging of the stone to the desired location usually took a few days, depending upon the size of the stone. Once the stone was placed on the desired location, the foot, and head of the stone were identified by putting gingers and rice by the village priest. The entire village would pray to God and drag the stones to its selected area for erection. A proper hole would be dug on the ground to place the stone. When they erected the stones other materials such as spearheads, cow pats, and coins were placed underneath the stone. It was a belief by the villagers that the person on whose name a stone is successfully erected lived a very long life, like the lifespan of the iron objects placed underneath the stone. In this regards, Shakespear (1914: 89) noted that the process of uplifting and erecting of stone from the wooden sledge lasted for a few days to weeks. Stones were to be carefully erected because it was a belief that if the erected stone falls on the ground then the intending person and his family would suffer great tragedy. All of the *Tiisum* which are located in the Katak area and in other areas in the village was erected through this tradition.

LABOUR MOBILISATION, FEASTING, AND RESOURCE EXPENDITURE

Huge labour forces were required in the process of dragging and uplifting the stones from the wooden sledge to the ground. Able-bodied men of the village participated in dragging and uplifting the stones. Informants claimed that about 300 to 400 people participated in the process of dragging of a large stone. However, labour mobilisation varied considerably accordingly to the size of stones. In cases of a very big stone, when only men could not drag it then women would also participate in it. Labour participants were gathered only from the village. Erection of stones also required lots of feastings and a huge expenditure of resources by the intending person. This is one of the main reasons why only rich and wealthiest people could have carried out such undertakings. Starting from the day of stone dragging, the intending person would kill a large number of animals such as buffalos, pigs, and other animals to serve to the people who were participating in stone dragging. Before the event of stone dragging, the intending person would gather all the necessary resources such as firewood, rice beer, and a large number of cattle to be killed from the first day of stone dragging. The process of stone dragging usually lasted for a few days, and uplifting of the stone again would again require a number of days. On the successful erection of stone on the selected location, the host was required to give a series of feasts to the entire village for many days. Sometimes such feast would continue for more than a week.

STATUS OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND TIISUM

Individual who had successfully erected stones in his name would enjoy a special status in the village. Once a person was able to erect a stone in his name then he would be allowed to wear the same kind of clothes as wore by the village chief (see also Hodson 1911: 181). He or his family would also acquire a higher social status in the village. The individual who had erected stones in his name were given a special place in the village gathering, and he was considered as more or less equivalent to the status of the village chief. The status of the individuals who had erected stones also depends upon the size of the stone erected. The house of the person who had erected a stone was allowed to decorate elaborately like the house of the village chief. According to the tradition an

individual was allowed to erect more than one stone on the basis of their abilities and wishes. If a person erected several stones then his status would be considered much higher than that person who had erected only a single stone.

4.6.2 BURIAL STONES

Stones placed over the burials are known as *Arou Atu*. The word *'Arou'* means grave and the word *'Atu'* means stone in Maram dialect. In term of structural form, it is a flat stone which is associated with or without cairns. According to local informants, construction of *Arou Atu* is continued as a living tradition in the village, especially among the followers of *Maidamei* religion. However, the practice itself has now taken transformation and is quite different from the ways it was practiced in the earlier period. Traditionally, everyone could not build this type of stone in memory of their beloved deceased family members. Only the rich and wealthy people could afford to build this type of stones in the name of their family members. The flat stones which are located in the courtyards of houses are the burial stones. They are placed right above the spot where the dead body got buried. The whole idea of placing stones over the burial site is to serve as a memorial stone and to avoid future construction of burial over the same area. In addition, it was a belief that the soul of the dead person would come and sit on this stone and look at his paddy field (terrace field) and house.

TREATMENT OF THE DEATH

Traditionally, people in the village have a belief that after the death of a person his/her soul would stay in the house for several days. In other words, they had a belief in life after death. People had a clear notion of heaven (*Stingam*) and hell (*Kateiram/Mikom*). It was a belief that the soul of a good person would go to *Stingam*, whereas the soul of a bad person would go to *Kateiram or Mikom.* It was also believed that the soul of a dead person would travel a long journey to reach *Stingam*. Therefore, they used to place foods, and drink on the top of the burials to be used by the soul during their journey to heaven. They also performed rituals to enable the soul to reach heaven safely. Traditionally, dead bodies were buried at the time of sunset in the village. However, burials of people who met unnatural death such as – suicide, fall from the tree or hill cliff, and death due to

childbirth was done outside of the village area. For burials, villagers would dig the ground in a rectangular shape to enable to bury the dead body properly. People in the village did not use any coffins when they buried the dead body. In case if the dead person was a man than they would bury it along with materials such as spears, swords, and sometimes with clothes. In case of the female, they would bury the dead body along with cotton, knife, traditional clothes, women's baskets, and others.

ELIGIBILITY OF A FAMILY TO CONSTRUCT AROU ATU

The construction of *Arou Atu* in the village was entirely dependent upon two things – wealth and wish of the deceased family. Similar to the construction of *Tiisum*, construction of *Arou Atu* was also very expensive which only the rich and wealthy people in the village could afford to build. Construction of this type of stone monuments was usually carried out after the dead body was properly buried in the ground. If the family members of the deceased person wished to construct *Arou Atu* they would first seek a formal permission from the village council. It should be noted that this type of stone could not be built without the consent of the village council. Again the permission was to be sought through the invitation of members of the village council, in the house of the intending family and offering them a dinner of meat, rice beer, and rice. Only after the request of the family was accepted, then the village council would announce the wish of the deceased family to construct an *Arou Atu* in the village. Then a fixed date for the construction of *Arou Atu* would be announced by the village council. In case of the construction of this type of the stone, members of the intending family were not required to perform *'genna'* as it was required in the case of *Tiisum.* However, the intending family was required to gather all the resources such as firewood, rice beers, and cattle to be sacrificed before the event of the construction of *Arou Atu.*

LABOUR MOBILISATION, FEASTING, AND RESOURCE EXPENDITURE

On a fixed day, the village council along with all the villagers would gather and haul the stone to the location where the dead body was already buried. The process of dragging of stone was similar to the process of dragging of stone for *Tissum*. However, construction of *Arou Atu* generally required lesser labour involvement. According to local informants,

it was usually accomplished in a day or two unlike in case of the erection of *Tissum* where more number of days was usually required. The person who hosted the ceremony would sacrifice a large number of animals such as buffaloes or bulls in order to propitiate the spirit of the deceased person in whose name the structure had to be raised. The villagers were then served with a series of the feast by the host family. The feast usually consists of meat, rice, and rice beer. Hence, it was very necessary for the host family to arrange all the necessary materials before the start of the event of the stone dragging. Potsangbam Binodini Devi (2011: 153) has noted that the intending family or the individual person would arrange a bull or a cow or a buffalo, four to five jar of rice beer, each of which contains about thirty liters and large quantities of rice to be fed to the participants. Once the stone was dragged over the burial area, the priest would utter spells and perform rituals. When the construction work was completed, the name of the deceased person would be given to the stones.

4.6.3 RESTING STONES (RANII ATU)

The word *'Ranii Atu'* means resting stone in Maram dialect. Structurally, it is a stone circle. There are two types of the *Ranii Atu* in the village - one group consists of three large stone circles built by the three clans of the village in the name of their respective clans and the other group consists of smaller stone circles built in the name of families.

RANII ATU OF THE CLAN

In term of function, the three largest *Ranii Atu* served as a resting place for the respective three tribal clans, and in time of war with neighbouring villages, it served as the watchtower. The three largest *Ranii Atu* were built separately by the people of each the three tribal clans of the village. The smaller *Ranii Atu* was built only by the wealthiest family in the courtyards of their houses. It was to serve as the resting place for the family members. The three largest *Ranni Atu* were built by the clan members of the village. The three tribal clans, namely – Kapsilamei, Kangkuinamei, and Hangnamei Houmei, have their own separate *Ranii Atu*. The *Ranii Atu* of the Kapsiilamei clan is the largest in the village (Figure 10) which is followed by the *Ranii Atu* of the Kangkuinamei clan (Figure 20), and Hangnamei Houmei clan (Figure 36). These three stone circles were built by the

youths of their respective clans. According to informant's accounts, each of the tribal clan's members tried to build the most beautiful stone circle in the village. Therefore, there was strong competition among the tribal clans to build the most elaborated *Ranni Atu* in the village. According to Maling (informant), *Ranii Atu* of the clans was built with great hardships and that it took a number of days to build them. Regardless of gender, all the villagers could sit on the top of these stone circles and enjoy the breathtaking view of the surrounding landscape.

RANII ATU OF THE FAMILY

Traditionally, if a person wishes to build a family *Ranni Atu,* then he was required to first seek a formal permission from the village council. Once the permission was granted then all the people of the village would help him in the construction of the *Ranni Atu.* On the day of construction of *Ranii Atu,* the host family was required to throw a feast to the entire village. He would kill animals and serve the villagers with rice beer and meat. Therefore, only those families who were wealthy and resourceful could manage to build *Ranni Atu* in the village.

4.6.4 RELIGIOUS STONES

In Willong Khullen village, touching of the early religious stones is still strictly forbidden by the tradition. Villagers believed that deities dwell near these religious stones. Therefore, locals believe that touching the religious stones would bring misfortune and tragedy to the individual or to the whole family. In past, individual who had touched these religious stones were incurred with heavy fines. If someone touched the religious stones then the village priest would carry out purification rites. According to Mr. Maling (a local informant), there are three types of religious or holy stones in the village, they are - *Sagatu, Tiisum Kamatei,* and *Attuchaga Kamatei.*

SAGATU

The word '*Sagatu'* literally means 'precious stones' in Maram dialect. Structurally, it is cairns (Figure 24). It is still considered as untouchable stones by the villagers, both by the followers of the Christian and *Miadamei* religion in the village.

TIISUM KAMATEI

The word '*Tiisum Kamatei'* literally means 'holy stones' in Maram dialect. Structurally, it consists of two menhirs (Figure 12). It is still considered by the villagers as untouchable stones. It is a belief by the locals that these stones have no dirt on it. It symbolises purity and goodness to the villagers.

ATTUCHAGA KAMATEI

There is also another holy stone which is known as *Attuchaga Kamatei* in the village. According to the informant's account, this particular stone is located near the Katak area. Entry to this area, however, was restricted by the villagers during the fieldwork. The local informants claimed that *Attuchaga Kamatei* is a flat stone in term of its structure. This stone is believed to have fallen down from the sky in the early past. Traditionally, any important religious announcement in the village was made by the village priest by standing on the top of this stone. Other than the village priest, locals were not allowed to touch this stone. If any individual was found to touched it then heavy fines were imposed upon that person. Till today it is considered as an important religious stone especially among the followers of the *Maidamei* religion. Followers of the Christian religion also still consider this stone as secret stone.

4.7 TRADITION AND CONTINUITY

According to local informants, the tradition of construction of stone monuments especially *Arou Atu* is continued by some group of people in the village till today. It is mainly continued by the followers of the *Maidamei* religion and in a much-modified manner by few followers of the Christian religion. The main reason for abandoning several early traditions of the stone erections in the village is mainly to do with the advent of Christian missionaries. According to local informants, Fr. Peter Bianchi was the first Christian missionary who had arrived at Willong Khullen village in the year 1957. The first person who was converted into the Christian religion in the village was named Hingba. He was the son of Malem. In the subsequent years, other Christian missionaries also came and converted the locals into the Christianity. In the early period, very few

people were converted into the Christian religion because followers of the *Maidamei* religion had opposed conversion to the Christianity. However, gradually more and more people were converted into the Christian religion as a result of which ninety-seven percent of the population at present are followers of the Christian religion. According to informant's accounts, the main reason for the Christian people to continue some parts of their early tradition of *Arou Atu* construction is partly that of their love of the early traditions, and also because of the lack of the proper cemetery area in the village. Whenever followers of the *Maidamei* religion die in the village, locals still continue to bury the dead body following the early tradition. They also continued to put materials such as clothes, swords, spears, and others when dead body are buried. In addition, under the influence of the Christian religion, several earlier social practices associated with the construction of *Arou Atu* is also now becoming a fast fading tradition. During the course of the ethnographic study in the village, no construction of *Arou Atu* took place. According to local informants, at present these stone monuments are continued to build in the village only when the followers of the *Maidamei* religion are dead in the village.

Apart from this continued tradition, there is also another tradition which is still followed by the locals. It was observed during the field survey that locals continued to practice their early tradition of sitting on the *Ranii Atu* (Figure 20). According to informant's accounts, this tradition is continued by the followers of Christian people and as well as people of *Maidamei* religion. Though several early traditions of the village have changed under the influence of the Christian religion, it is very clear that locals still continued several aspects of their early tradition.

4.8 DISCUSSION

The ethnographic study undertaken at Willong Khullen village has helped in gaining detail information on the social context of the creation of stone monuments, which archaeological survey alone would find it difficult to interpret. It has helped in understanding the traditional methods of the construction of stone monuments and various social processes involved in the production of stone monuments. Firstly, ethnographic information also brought to light that stone monuments which are spatially

and temporally distributed on the landscape of the village were built none other than by the early ancestors of the people whose descendants presently inhabit the village and that some of this early tradition are still continued among them, especially among the followers of the *Maidamei* religion in the village. It has also revealed that under the influence of Christian religion several earlier traditions associated with the practice of stone erection in the village are a fast diminishing tradition in the village.

The analysis of the functional types of the stones which are found in the village has shown that stones are imbued with religious, symbolic, social, economic, and political significance of the early society. Stone monuments such as *Sagatu, Tisum Kamatei*, and *Attuchagga Kamatei* are infused with the religious and spiritual belief of the people. Whereas stone monuments such as *Tissum, Arou-Atu, Ranii* are infused with the symbolic, social, and political significance of the early society. However, beyond these spiritual or religious significances, stone monuments in the village are clearly material expressions of the economic well being and nature of the social structure of the early society.

Ethnographic information shows that the traditional society of the village that had produced megaliths was organised as village council society. The nature of the early social organisation in the village was not strictly based upon hierarchy and that there was enough space for social mobility. This space was utilised by rich and wealthy people to attain a higher social status in the society. In order to achieve a higher social status in the social structure, a person should have been able to construct a stone monument in his name which other common people could not easily afford to do so. Although equal opportunity to construct stone monuments were given to all the people in the society, only the rich people who had the necessary resources were socially eligible to construct stone monuments in their name. As elaborated above, this was mainly because the construction of the stone monuments was a substantial undertaking which requires time, enormous labour mobilisation, resource expenditure, and feastings. In the traditional society of the village, terrace farming, and domestication of the animals were the primary sources of the accumulation of wealth. It also appears that the largest expenditure of resources (rice, animals, rice beers, and others) by an individual was on the construction

of stone monument as it required lots of feastings. Since not all had the ability and only a handful of people could erect stone structures there were apparently inequalities in term of accumulation of wealth among the people. In other words, people who had erected stones in their name were given social distinctiveness and recognition of a higher status in the traditional society which allowed them to wear the same kind of the dress worn by that of the village chief and to decorate their houses more elaborately than other people's houses in the village. In addition, they were also given social recognition by allotting a special place in any important social events held at the village. The majority of the stone monuments in the village were built to represent the merit of the individuals or for the families rather than for the whole society. Therefore, the traditional society which had created megaliths were not truly an egalitarian society as there were clearly inequalities of social status among people who had erected stones and who had not erected stones.

Regarding the pattern of early settlement at the village, local informants claimed that the early settlement in the village was made only on the hilltop. The settlement on the hilltop was made by the early ancestor of the village for strategic and security reasons against enemy's attacks. The settlement which is located presently on the lower slope of the hill is therefore of recent extension as a result of population pressure on the hilltop area of the village.

Another significant finding from the ethnographic study is that construction of stone monuments in the village, be it *Tissum* or *Arou Atu* was associated with iron objects. Although it is not certain as to when the iron was first introduced in this village, the association of the iron objects in the construction of the stone monuments certainly signifies some sort of technological development of the people apart from their general religious or spiritual orientation.

As far as chronology or date of the beginning of megaliths construction in the village is concerned, ethnographic information suggests that the construction of the *Tissum* (menhir) was much earlier than any other forms of the stone structures in the village. Further, ethnographic information also suggests that the construction of stone monuments was started about fifteen generations ago i.e. it was started as soon as the beginning of the

first settlement. Therefore, by taking into account four generations as one century, the relative date for the beginning of megaliths construction at the village could have started about 300-400 years ago.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

Recapitulating the primary observations made in the previous chapters and presenting the discussions has shown several new findings in the context of megaliths of Willong Khullen village, hitherto not much known to the larger academic discussions in India. Fortunately, the preliminary field survey in view of this study has for the first time brought to light several unrecorded megaliths which are spatially and temporally distributed on the landscape of the study area. In other words, this study, for the first time was able to provide a systematic detail documentation of thirty-six megaliths clusters which have never been reported in any of the previous studies. Through the systematic detail documentation and mapping of megaliths and ancestral structures on GIS maps, this study has shown the variability of the stone monuments in term of their size and distribution pattern on the landscape. On top of that, it has shown that stone monuments which would require a considerable amount of manpower while undertaking construction are located nearby hillside in the topographically elevated areas. The detailed analysis of the sizes of the stone monuments also suggested that there was differential involvement of labour participants in the construction process of each of the stone monument. In addition, construction of numerous and large size megaliths in the village would have required considerable manpower, and labour mobilisation which clearly signifies the emergence of a new form of labour organisation couple with technological advancement and increase in population in the village. These archaeological inferences imply that there was a complex form of social organisation in the village that could manage one of the largest undertakings of megaliths construction in the village.

These archaeological inferences are further reinforced by ethnographic information collected from the village. The analysis of the ethnographic information has shown that a complex form of social organisation was there in the village. In other words, the form of the social organisation that had produced megaliths was a village council based society. It has shown that every important decision in the village, be it megaliths construction in the name of individuals or any other mundane activities were decided by village council that

comprised of the village chief (*Sagong*) and clan leaders (*Kapras*). It has also shown that there was no rigid hierarchical structure in the society. However, there were without any doubt inequalities of status among people in the village on the basis of disparity of wealth and consequent abilities to build stone monuments. Putting it in plain words, those people who were extremely rich and wealthy were socially eligible to earn a higher social status by erecting stone monuments in their name. Individuals who had erected stones in their name were given social recognition of higher status in the society which allowed them to wear the same kind of clothes worn by the village chief. Their houses were similarly allowed to decorate elaborately as that of the house of the village chief which was indicative of their achieved upper social status within the society. Further, they were also accrued with a higher social position at any important event held in the village. On top of that, the status of the individuals who had erected stone monuments was regarded as equal to the status of the village chief. With exception of the village chief, higher social status had to be earned in the society which also further implies that there was strong competition among the people in the society to acquire resources and attain social distinctiveness within the society. Therefore, this study contends that early megaliths society of Willong Khullen village was not truly an egalitarian society as there were disparities of wealth and social status of people within the society.

From the analysis and detailed mapping of the forms of megaliths and other ancestral structures on maps, some insights can be drawn on the pattern of early settlement in the village. The presence of megaliths forms, viz. flat stones, cairns, and stone circles, and earlier ancestral structures such as *morung*, and village gate on the hilltop has suggested a prolong period of human occupation as well as an area of significance in the early cultural landscape. The presence of few megaliths with no important ancestral structures on the lower slope of the hill has suggested that there has been a short period of human occupation on the lower slope of the hill in sharp contrast to the hilltop where material traces are abundantly located. Therefore, settlement of the people on the lower slope of the hillside appears to be of gradual and recent extension from the hilltop. These findings are also equally reinforced by the ethnographic information gathered through the ethnographic study at the village. The ethnographic study has shown that the early settlement in the village was made on the hilltop mainly for the security reasons against

attacks by neighbouring villages. Therefore, this study has contributed to a nascent understanding of the early pattern of the settlement in the village.

In the absence of any scientific dating, an exact chronology or date of the start of megaliths construction in the village is difficult to ascertain absolutely. However, as a new study technique that this research has developed; an examination of the architectural design and colour setting of megalith forms has suggested that menhirs in the village were constructed in the earlier period in comparison to other form of megaliths because menhirs are roughly dressed and it has bear erosive marks on the stone surface due to prolonged period of withstanding to weathering process. Therefore, more roughly dressed menhirs can be ascertained to have been built relatively in the earlier period. Ethnographic information collected from the village has also underpinned that the menhirs were erected in the earlier period as compared to other forms of the megaliths. Regarding the chronology of the start of megaliths construction in the village, ethnographic information has suggested that the early settlement in the village was started about sixteen generations ago. In this regard, by taking into account four generations as mark of one century, the start of megaliths construction in the village can relatively be placed in 1600-1700 C.E. Therefore, this study which is based on fresh field survey data and consequent analysis has challenged the conviction that "megalithic sites in Manipur have not so far yielded any inherent evidence of chronology" (Devi 2011: 215).

To conclude, the field based preliminary case study has succeeded in apprehending the form of megaliths society that had produced megaliths in Willong Khullen village. This research proceeded with five primary objectives: i) proper documentation of different forms of megaliths and earlier ancestral structures present in the village; ii) to create proper sitemaps (GIS maps) of the location of megaliths and ancestral structures to determine the spatial relationship and variability of sizes of stones on the landscape; ii) to document the traditional methods of megaliths construction in the village including the performance of rituals, expenditure of resources, mobilisation of manpower, quarrying, and hauling of the stone monuments; iv) to understand whether only a few groups of the people erected stones, or everyone could erect stones. What were the social benefit accrued to those people who had erected megaliths in the past; and v) to establish a

relative chronology for the beginning of the megaliths construction in the village. This preliminary case study has therefore achieved its five main objectives.

Some of the limitations of this current work are the inability to provide a detail documentation of the clusters of menhirs located particularly in the Katak area of the village. As mentioned in the preceding chapters that the conduct of the survey work in this particular area was restricted by the locals. So this research work has to rely on the limited data of the previous scholars for this particular area. Unfortunately, given the lack of the detail documentation by the previous scholars, all of the menhirs in this particular area could not be presented systematically on the GIS maps. If the systematic survey was allowed by the locals in this area, then further detail documentation would have been achieved in this study which would, by and large, make the spatial analysis holistic. A second limitation of this present work is the inability to present the spatial analysis of the megaliths and ancestral structures on satellite imageries such as Digital Elevation Module (DEM) maps. This is partly due to the limited time frame within which the study has to be completed coupled with the difficulties and cost of creating several satellite imageries. The third limitation is that the ethnographic information collected from the village was based on a short term based fieldwork. There was not much time and opportunity to go into the depth of some of the aspects where the ethnographic approach of data collection equipped us to take care of any the societal mooring of a particular site. If there were no as such issue, the analysis and interpretation might have brought the arguments of this research at different lengths so as to connect with further thoughts and ideas.

In the future, there is an immense scope for conducting archaeological and ethnographic study at this village. For archaeological survey work, there is also feasibility to carry out systematic fieldwork in the restricted Katak area of the Willong Khullen village by establishing a good rapport with the residents of the village. For this, as a researcher, one needs to go and get familiar with the geographical and social aspects of the village, first through observation method and then, key informants who would help in locating the possible domains of study and prospective informants. Afterward, with repeated visits, a good rapport of being felt as one of them will allow a successful data collection process. Researchers can also build upon this study by further examining the aspects of ideology

and various underlying symbolic meanings associated with megaliths constructed in this village. Since all of the menhirs in this village are oriented in specific directions from east to west and north to south, there is also a possibility to carry out in-depth research work to determine whether these stone monuments actually had the astronomical significance of the early society. Future, studies can also be taken forward to investigate the possible linkages of the available iron objects and with the construction of megaliths in the village. Again, the multidisciplinary research design employed in this study; combining systematic archaeological field survey method and ethnographic study can be applied to all of the reported megaliths sites of Manipur which has so far been very less studied by scholars from a multidisciplinary approach.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Transcript of interview with R. Maling (Chairperson) and his wife Elia of Willong Khullen village

Me: When was the first settlement in Willong Khullen village started?

Maling: An exact date or time period of the first settlement in the village would be unknown to everyone. However, it is generally believed by villagers that the first settlement in the village was started from the pre-historic time.

Me: What is the name of the tribal group residing in your village?

Maling: The tribal group of Willong Khullen village is Maram Naga. As Maram Naga, we speak Maram dialect. However, the language we normally speak in our village has variation from the language of Upper Maram Naga (Maram Khullen). We do not have our own scripts, so Roman scripts are used in our writing.

Me: Tell me in detail about the present demography of Willong Khullen village?

Maling: At present, our village has a population figure of about 5,000 people. There are about 402 households in my village. However, to give an exact number of people and households would be difficult for me. There are three tribal clans in my village. These three tribal clans make up the entire population of the village. They are known as *Sadung* in our dialect. The three tribal clans are – Kapsiilamei, Kangkuinamei, and Hangnamei Houmei. People of our village mainly follow two types of religion. They are Christian and *Maidamei* religion. *Maidamei* is our ancestral religion followed by our ancestors. But today, only about 20 households are the followers of this religion in our village. The followers of this religion are especially older age groups of people in our village who did not embrace the Christian religion. There are two lower denominations of the Christian Church in my village. They are the Catholic and Baptist church. The majority of the people from Kapsiilamei clan are the followers of the Catholic Church. About 200 households are adherents of the Catholic Church in my village. The Baptist Church is followed by around 150 to 180 households.

Me: Could you tell me briefly about the *Maidamei* religion?

Maling: *Maidemei* is a Pagan religion. Followers of this religion perform lots of rites and sacrifices. According to this religion, there is no exact form or name of God. But people beliefs that there is an unnamed supreme God. Followers of this religion mainly worship nature and spirits.

Me: When was Christian missionary first arrived in your village?

Maling: The Catholic missionary first arrived in our village in 1957. The golden jubilee celebration was also recently held in our village. Subsequently, after the Catholic missionary Baptist missionary came to our village in 1958. In the initial period, the missionaries could not gain many followers as the villagers did not embrace the Christian religion. But gradually people started to embrace the Christian religion.

Me: Why people embraced the Christian religion in your village?

Maling: In my opinion**,** people believed in the gospels of the Christian religion.

Me: What is the economy of the people in your village?

Maling: The economy of the people in our village is agriculture. At present, people mainly practice terrace farming as a primary source of income. People cultivate rice and vegetables. People also exports vegetables grown on the terrace field. Apart from agriculture, the people in our village also practice occasional fishing every year in the month of the April and March in the Barak River. In addition, people have started to do small-scale businesses in several parts of the state.

Me: What was the economy of the people in the past?

Maling: Aside from terrace farming, our ancestors also practiced jhum cultivation. More or less with the economy of the present people in our village, our ancestor depended on agriculture as the main source of their livelihood. However, hunting also constituted an important source of the economy of the people in our village in the past. Hunting was carried out in the surrounding hills. Large numbers of the animals were caught from such hunting activities.

Me: How long do you think the tradition of stone erection has been practising in your village?

Maling: The tradition of the erection of the stone monuments in our village has been practising since our ancestors established the first settlement in the village. However, an exact time for when it was started in our village is beyond my knowledge. Most likely it was started after the first settlement in the village.

Me: How many generations of people have lived in your village?

Maling: Ah! About fifteen to sixteen generations of people have lived in our village (Maling remarked this after discussing with his wife, Elia).

Me: What are the different types of stone monuments present in your village? And their names?

Maling: There are different types of stone monuments in my village. They are *Ranii Atu, Tiisum, Arou Atu, Sagatu, Tiisum Kamatei*, and *Attuchaga Kamatei.*

Me: What is *Ranii Atu*? Why did people erect *Ranni Atu*?

Maling: *Ranii Atu* is a resting or sitting stone. The word *'Ranii Atu'* literally means 'resting place' in our Maram dialect. It was built by our forefathers for the purpose of resting and sitting for the villagers. It was not associated with any forms of the burials. It was a resting place for both male and female in the village. Every clan has their own separate *Ranni Atu.* There was no restriction that people of one clan could not sit on *Ranii Atu* of another tribal clan. The people of the different clan could sit on the *Ranii Atu* of another clan. Men, women, and children could sit on the *Ranii Atu.* Till today it serves as a resting place for travelers and villagers who return back home wearily from the terrace field or from woods as it was in the past. In the early period, when there was village warfare between our and neighbouring villages, it served as a watchtower to look for enemies who were coming to attack our village. Till today it is considered by villagers as a sacred and important place in our village.

Me: How was *Ranii Atu* built?

Maling: There are at present three largest *Ranii Atu* in our village. These were built separately by the tribal clans of our village. Each tribal clan separately built their own *Ranii Atu.* It was built by a large number of people and with hard efforts. Very recently, villager carried out repairing work of *Ranii Atu* in view of preserving our age old tradition. Apart from these three largest *Ranii Atu,* there is also another groups of smaller *Ranii Atu* in our village that were built

as a resting place for the family members. It was meant to be the resting place for the family members only. Very few rich families could afford to construct it. Till today, people continued to sit on it.

Me: Where did the villagers get the stones for the construction of such *Ranii Atu*?

Maling: Stones were generally taken from the hill that is located on the eastern side of the village.

Me: Tell me about *Tiisum*? Why people erected it in your village? Is the erection of *Tiisum* still a living tradition in your village?

Maling: The word *'Tiisum'* literally means 'erected stones' in Maram language. It is a memorial or commemorative stones in its function. The tradition of the erection of *Tiisum* is no more continued in our village. It is the oldest forms of stone monuments erected in our village. It was erected long back by our forefathers. Very recently one of *Tiisum* has fallen down on the ground and it was subsequently erected to its original location by the locals. People who were extremely rich and powerful could only afford to erect this type of stone monuments. It was erected by only wealthy and rich individual to gain a higher status in our society. Both male and female could erect *Tiisum*. However, it was generally erected in the name of the male individual in our village in his lifetime. It was the dream of every villager to erect such stone in his/her name. However, very few *Tiisum* were erected after successful victory in the war with the neighbouring villages or in the name of the tribal clans.

If a person wishes to erect such stone in his or her name then he would at first seek a formal consent from the village chief, council, and clan leaders. He would invite them to his house and treat them formally by serving a dinner of meat and rice beer. If the person got the approval, then his name would be announced in the village gathering. Once the name of the individual was announced to the public then he was to erect the stones at any rate despite unavoidable difficulties. A time would be fixed by the village council for the ceremony of stone erection. Stones would be selected with the help of village priest or people who were expert in selecting stone. Selected stone would be left cover with clothes and leaves so that women and children could not touch or see it. If women or children see or touch it then it was a belief that at the time of stone erection there would be difficulties in dragging the stone. The individual on whose name

stone was to be erected would isolate himself from his family members for a few months or one year. During this time, he was forbidden to have sex with his wife. The main reason for this isolation was to avoid sexual intercourse with his wife. If the individual had sex with his wife, then it was a belief that the ceremony of stone erection would not be successful. He was required to prepare his food and eat with his wife separately from the family members. He was also forbidden to consume meat. During this period of isolation, ginger and rice beer constituted the main item of food for the individual.

Me: Can you please elaborate more about it?

Maling: During the period of isolation, he would pray to God to enable him to successfully erect a stone in his name. He would also gather animals and make preparation of all the resources which would be required for the series of feasts. On the day of stone erection, all the villagers would go and dragged those selected stones. The intending person or host would serve the villagers with meat, food, and rice beer since the first day of the stone dragging event. All the villagers would dress in their traditional dress and dragged the selected stone to reach the desired location of erection. The merit seeker and his wife would also come along with the village chief. But they would not participate in stone dragging process. Stones were mainly carried or dragged down along the hill slope, and during these process, many people had lost their lives. If someone dies during the process of stone dragging then the stone erection ceremony would be canceled, and it would be considered as a bad omen. It was not possible to drag stones upward from the lower slope of the hill, so stones were taken from the eastern hillside of our village. Stone erections were carried out mostly during the month of March and April. And dragging of stone had to be completed within 5 to 6 days. If in case, the villagers could not drag it within the said period then the same stone would not be allowed to erect again by the intending person.

Me: How many people actually participated in such stone dragging process? How many animals were killed in such events?

Maling: It's not very clear to me that how many people had actually participated in such events. But large numbers of people especially the males participated in such events; about 200 – 300 people participated in dragging of stones. However, the number of the participants also varied upon the sizes of stones. If there were not enough men to drag the stones than women would join in stone dragging. A large number of animals such as cows and buffaloes were killed to serve as

food to villagers by the host family. This would be started from the first day of stone dragging event and would continue so even after the successful erection of stone for several days. Therefore, it could only be afforded by the rich and wealthy people. No common man could afford to build such stones.

Me: How was *Tiisum* erected in the past?

Maling: Once the stone was dragged to the desire or selected location for erection, the village priest, and all the villagers would pray to God and certain offering would be made to enable successful erection of stone. The head and tail of stone would be identified by putting ginger on stones. Once the head of the stone was identified then all villager would use some traditional methods to uplift the stone from the wooden sledge to set the stone vertically in the dug ground. When they erected stone they would put spearheads, swords, coins, and cow pat underneath the ground. They didn't bury the stones very deeply in the ground. Once the stone was successfully erected, the villagers would feast together, which was arrange by the host. The feast would continue for a few more days even after the successful erection of stone. It was up to the host family to sacrifice the number of animals on such stone dragging ceremonies. Usually, on such occasion, a large number of animals were killed for the series of feasting. The erected stone would be given the name of the individual person. It was a belief that his fortune and luck would increase after the successful erection of stone in his name. Not only that, he would occupy a higher status in our society after erecting a stone in his name. He would be allowed to dress like the village chief. He would also occupy a special place in every public gathering of our village. The status of a person who had erected stone would increase tremendously. All the *Tiisum* at the Katak area of Willong Khullen village was erected through this manner and in the name of the individual person. These stones have been standing for many generations and the biggest cluster of *Tiisum* is in the Katak area of our village. The word '*Katak'* means 'stones rising place' in our Maram dialect. It is still considered as a very sacred place by our villagers. Moreover, villagers believed that stone monuments in the Katak area talk to one another at night time. There is also a belief that spirits dwell amongst the stones of the Katak area. Therefore, it is still very fearful to us at night time.

Me: Why is survey work, especially in the Katak area of your village restricted to me?

Maling: All the villagers have unanimously decided to stop the entry of the outsiders, either surveyors or tourists in this particular area for many years. Even if I wish to let you enter this area, I'm equally helpless as it was a collective decision of the villagers. To revoke such a decision, would not be a goodwill as a chairperson of this village. In the past, there was a deceitful incident which had happened in this area. All the villagers made very hard attempts to get some grant from the government in view of preserving this area which has connection to our ancestors and the history of settlement. At last, the money for the preservation of this site was granted by the government, but unfortunately, some people who are not from our village had snatched away the money and used it for their own purpose. After this incident, it was decided that no survey should be allowed in this area. It is now presumed by all the people in our village that researchers and tourists are coming especially to make money from this area by taking photos and projects from the government. Therefore, even clicking photos and entry into this area, has been strictly prohibited by villagers. Very recently, a team of students and teachers who claimed to be from Manipur University came to our village as you are coming right here now. But, having learned that no research activities are further allowed in this area they all went back in vain.

Me: What is *Arou Atu*? Why people erected *Arou Atu*?

Maling: The words '*Arou Atu'* literally means gravestone. The word *'Arou'* means grave or burial and the word *'Atu'* means stone in Maram dialect. People erected *Arou Atu* to show respect and honour to the dead souls. It is a belief among people that the souls of the deceased would come and sit on these stones and look at their terrace field and their houses. Stones were placed just over the burials so that it would serve as a memory of the deceased person and indicate that a dead body was already buried in this area.

Me: Is it the tradition of the erection of *Arou Atu* still in practice in Willong Khullen village?

Maling: Yes, the tradition of the erection of *Arou Atu* is a living tradition in our village. When a woman is dead, ornaments and dresses are usually placed in the burials. When men are dead then swords, spears, clothes are placed in the burials. Sometimes food and rice beers are also placed over burial place on the ground. This practice is mainly continued by the followers of the *Maidamei* religion. Some of the Christian people in our village also follow this tradition until today, but somewhat in a much-modified manner and their rituals are carried out mostly in

accordance with the Christian religion. When Christian people die cemented stone are also built. But the early tradition of placing of stone over the burial is no longer a popular or compulsory tradition, even among the followers of *Madaimei* religion. But very rarely, people continued this early tradition. In addition, even if it is a continued practice, feasts are carried out on a small scale not necessarily in the same manner of series of feasts carried out in the past that required sacrifice of a large number of animals.

Me: How was *Arou Atu* constructed in the past?

Maling: It is exactly unknown how people had actually constructed *Arou Atu*. As far early tradition of the village is concerned, it was constructed by the rich and wealthy people. Because construction of *Arou Atu* was expensive and it requires a series of feasting of the villager. If a person wished to build *Arou Atu* then, he would make a formal request to the village council and clan elders. A day would be fixed by them for the construction of *Arou Atu*. All the villagers would quarry, drag, and place the stones just over the burial. Certain rituals would be carried out on the day of construction of *Arou Atu*. During the stone dragging process and after placing the stone over the burial host family would throw a big feast with meat, rice, and rice beer to all of the villagers. A large number of animals such as cows, bulls, and would be sacrificed for the purpose of the feasting to the entire village by the host family of the deceased one. Only the wealthy people built *Arou Atu* in our village.

Me: Is there any stone monument which is known as *'Beitung'*?

Maling: There is no stone monument called *'Beitung'* in our village! The word *'Beitung'* means hammer in our Maram language

Me: Tell me something about *Attuchaga Kamatei*?

Maling: *Attuchaga Kamatei* was a religious stone for all the people of our village in the early period. *Attuchaga Kamatei* is located in the Katak area. It was a belief that this stone was fallen down from the heaven. No one was allowed to touch this stone in the early past. If somebody knowingly or unknowingly touch this stone, then fines were imposed upon the individual who had touched it. In the past, only the village priest was allowed to touch this stone. He would stand on this particular stone on some important day and made announcements related to the rite and rituals of the *Maidamei* religion. This stone is still considered as sacred stone even today

among the followers of the *Maidamei* religion. The followers of the Christian religion also consider it as a sacred stone. They still are afraid to touch it.

Me: Tell me briefly about *Tiisum Kamatei*?

Maling: The words *'Tiisum Kamatei'* means 'holy stone.' It consists of two upright monoliths. It is still regarded by the villagers as holy stones in the village. Therefore people are afraid to touch these two stones until today. These stones are considered as a representation of 'righteousness' and 'goodness' in our village. It is considered to be so pure by us that it has no dirt on it. It was erected very long ago in the village. An exact time when these stones were erected is unknown.

Me: Tell me in detail about the *Sagatu*?

Maling: The word '*Sagatu'* literally means precious stone. It is considered as holly stone until today. There is only one *Sagatu* in our village. No one touches this stone. Even the followers of the Christian are afraid to touch this stone. People believe that local deities live around this stone. It is noteworthy to remember that *Sagatu* is not associated with burials.

Transcript of interview with Hiibanga (local)

Me: When was the first settlement in your village started?

Hiibanga: An exact time of the start of the settlement in the village is unknown. But, according to oral accounts of our village, the settlement was first started by three brothers, namely – *Nagapoing*, *Rang*, and *Boising*. The eldest brother was named *Ngapoing*, the second was *Rang*, and the youngest was *Boising.* These three brothers came to our village from the Maram Khullen and started our first settlement in the village. When they came, they did not bring their wives. It was most likely that they married Maram women after they established their settlement.

Me: Tell me in detail about *Maidamei* religion?

Hiibanga: *Maidaimei* is a Pagan religion. It is our oldest religion. It is still followed in our village by a few groups of people. The followers of this religion believe in the existence of God, however, there is no definite name or statue of the God. Followers of this religion perform lots of rites and ceremonies. People who follow this religion also offers alcohols and water before every dinner and lunch. Today very few households are following this religion.

Me: Could you please tell me in detail about the stone monuments of the Katak area of Willong Khullen village?

Hiibanga: *Tiisum* is the oldest forms of stone structures in Willong Khullen village. It was erected to earn higher status by individuals. It was erected very rarely by clans after victory in the war with neighbouring villages. At the time of the erection of these stone monuments, rituals were carried out. If proper rituals were not carried out then stone would fall down and if that happened then it was a belief that the individual person in whose name stone was erected or his family as a whole would suffer due to the wrath of God. At present, there is also a belief that there are spirits in the stone avenue of Katak. That is why till today villagers are afraid to enter this area at night. No one is also able to count the number of *Tiisum* in this area. Few people have attempted to count the number of stones in this area. Someone would count it as 100 stones, others would count it as 200 or 300 stones.

Me: Tell me about the three largest *Ranii Atu* and the tribal clans who built them?

Hiibanga: I do not have much detailed knowledge about it, but the largest *Ranii Atu* which is located near the entrance of our village belongs to Kapsiilamei tribal clan and it was built by them in the past. The second largest *Ranii Atu* which is located near the footpath and in the middle of the village area was built by Hangnamei Houmei tribal clan. The third largest *Ranii Atu* which is located on the westernmost part of the village was built by Kangkuinamei tribal clan.

Transcript of interview with Manning Lungba (local)

Me: Why was *Tiisum* erected by the early ancestors of your village?

Lungba: It was erected for commemorative and memorial purposes for the individual person during his lifetime. It was erected very long ago, so no one is very certain about how it was erected. But all the stones were not erected in one generation alone but through many generations. Sixty years old people in our village did not even witness how these stone were erected.

Me: How long do you think is the settlement in your village?

Lungba: I think our forefathers started the settlement in our village since the prehistory period. To my knowledge, about seven chiefs have completed their reign in our village. But I do not have other detail knowledge about it.

Me: Is it the tradition of *Arou Atu* construction still practicing in your village?

Lungba: Yes, the tradition of construction of *Arou Atu* is still practicing by people in the village. When people buried the dead body, they buried the body horizontally on the ground. In earlier times, if the deceased person was happened to be a female than they would bury it along with materials such as - woman's basket, woman's dresses, cotton, spade, knife, and so on. They placed these materials on side of the dead body. They didn't use any coffin in burying the dead body. Until today when a person dies, people bury the dead body with materials such as - spears, swords, and dresses. But when children are dead, the dead bodies are simply buried without materials association.

Me: Where was the stone for construction of *Arou Atu* taken from?

Lungba: The stones for the construction of *Arou Atu* were normally taken from the eastern hillside. Because it was impossible to drag the stones up from the lower slope of the hillsides.

Transcript of interview with Luihing (local)

Me: Is there any other name of Willong Khullen village?

Luihing: Yes, the name Willong Khullen as it is popularly known for today is in fact not the early original name of our village. This name was given by the British official when they came first to our village. The early name of our village is *Makuiluingui*, villager still called our village with this name only.

Me: Who was the Christian missionary that came first to your village? When did he come to your village?

Luihing: Fr. Peter Bianchi was the first Christian missionary who had come to our village. He arrived in our village in 1957.

Me: Is there other sub-tribal clans in your village?

Luihing: There are three main tribal clans in our village. They are Kapsiilamei, Kangkuinamei, and Hougnamei Houmei. The tribal clan of Kapsiilamei is divided into eleven sub-clans (*Pfutat*), viz. Rangpfunahmei, Boishingnahmei, Raidipfusungnahmei, Sagongkimei Lungdinahmei, Kahukimei, Puilingpuinahmei, Hushangkimei, Napoingnahmei, Namkangtahmei, Lungdisoinahmei. The sub-tribes of Kahukimei are the majority of Kapsiilamei clan. Kangkuinamei tribal clan have five sub-tribes, viz. Dirangnahmei, Kangkuinahmei, Sungngaibatamei, Ranngingnahmei, and Rangtahmei. Hangnamei Houmei clan is again divided into ten tribal sub-clans, viz. Kabangbatahmei, Sambatahmei, Thungingtahmei, Haomarongmei, Haomasangmei, Kemdirangnahmei, Muilungtahmei, Shingtahmei, Shoingtahmei, and Haidoihingtamei. Intermarriage between the same clan is strictly prohibited in our village.

Me: What are the main economic activities in the village of Willong Khullen?

Luihing: Today, in our village about seventy percent of the people in the village practices agriculture as their main source of income. Apart from agriculture, people also practice hunting as an occupation. Villager practice hunting in the month of the January, February, March, and April in groups. People catch monkey, deer, cat, and others from the hunt. Hunting groups conducted their hunting activities in different parts of the hills which are around our village. People do not carry out hunting in the same place again and again. No female is allowed to join the hunting groups. Nowadays people practice hunting using guns and few of the traditional weapons.

Me: Who is the head of your village at present?

Luihing: The chairperson who is selected by the villagers is the head of our village. In the earlier tradition, village chief was the head of our village. He was assisted by village council and clan elders. But village chief is still the secular and religious head of the village. When an important festival or cultural events in the village is organised then the village chief would be the head. For instance on important annual festivals such as *Mgibi* and *Katokngi*, village chief would be the head. *Magibi* is an annual festival which is held on the 29th of December. All the people in our village will wear traditional attires, perform cultural dances, and sings together. *Katoki*, on the other hand, is the sowing festival, which is generally held in the month of July. On this festival, all the clan's people will gather and have a feast together.

Me: Tell me about the religion of your village?

Luihing: Today, the majority of people in our village are followers of the Christian religion. But few households still followed our traditional religion which is known as *Maidamei* religion.

Me: Can you please tell me about the details of the history of the settlement in your village.

Luihing: According to the oral history of our village, the first settlement in our village was started by the three brothers who came from the Maram area in the early past, about sixteen generations ago. The first brother name was named *Ngapoing,* the second was named *Rang,* and the youngest was name *Boishing.* Before they established our village, they lived in the Maram area. According to the story, the three brothers lost their mother at their early age and their father married a woman. The new stepmother then tortured them, and even tried to kill them when their father was not at home. Therefore, the three sons could not live peacefully and so they decided to establish a settlement area far away from their home where they could lead their own life. In their quest for new settlement area, they came across the present land of Willong Khullen village. However, the three brothers noticed that the land was already marked by the people of Yangkhullen village as their future settlement area. But the three brothers only wanted to establish their settlement in this land. So, they figured out a clever plan to scare off the people of the Yangkhullen village. As part of their plan, they made a large number of leaf cups and filled them with rice beer and placed in the land which was already marked by Yangkhullen people as their settlement land. They also marked on the trees with their spears to make Yangkhullen people think that a large number of people had come and marked the land as there future settlement land. When people of Yangkhullen village came back, they noticed a large number of leaf cups and spear marks on the trees and assumed that a large number of people had come in the land and marked it as their future settlement area. They feared that if they established their settlement and those large number of people who had marked and left the land return back then there would be a fight in which they thought they would lose as their number were very few. So people of the Yangkhullen village left revoke their earlier plan for settlement in the land. Once the people of Yangkhullen village had gone, the three brothers soon established their first settlement in Willong Khullen village. After they made their settlement in the village they married Maram women. When they started their first settlement, they choose it only on the hilltop. This was because in the early period there were wars in between the villages. Therefore,

the main reason for starting the early settlement on the hilltop was for defensive purposes. They also built a village gate and dug ditches around the hilltop to form a defensive line against any surprise enemy attack.

Me: Could you tell me in details about the erection of stone monuments in your village?

Luihing: Stone erection is believed to have started just after the three brothers made their settlement in our village. According to the early tradition of our village, stones were quarried in the eastern hillside of the village. A large number of villagers were involved in dragging of stones. Stones were quarried by iron objects or other hard metals. When people were dragging stones, it was mandatory for a person to sit or stand on the stone because it was a belief that dragging of the stone by people became much easier if one person sits or stand over the stones. While dragging the stone the person who was sitting or standing on the stone would shout out loud - *"Mumeilungle, Tasokaikyii, Suirameg…"* and the people who were dragging the stone would in return shout out in unison - *"Oije, Oije, Oije ..."* in our Maram language. It was a belief that when these words were shouted out by people the evil spirit would laugh at the people who were engaged in dragging the stone. It was a belief that when the evil spirit was laughing, stone dragging became much easier for our villagers.