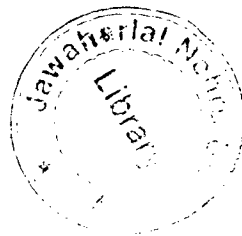


**LAND AND IDENTITY: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE
THADOU-KUKI TRIBES OF MANIPUR**

*Thesis submitted to
Jawaharlal Nehru University for the award of the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

HOINEILHING SITLHOU



**CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067
INDIA
2011**



CERTIFICATE

This thesis entitled "Land and Identity: A Sociological Study of the Thadou-Kuki Tribes of Manipur" submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University and is my original work.




Signature

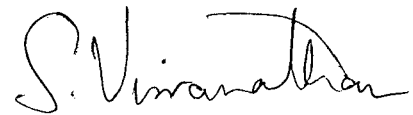
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We recommend that the thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the PhD degree of the University.


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Acknowledgements

This thesis is a result of five years of research work at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, India. I am indebted to many people and certain institutes for enabling me in the journey.

My special thanks to my supervisor, Prof. Susan Visvanathan, who has been a guide in the truest sense of the term. She has been there from the inception of the thesis till its completion, patiently helping me to problematise and theorise an area of study which is still raw and hardly trod-upon in terms of scholarly research and also suffered from dearth of secondary materials. She has corrected my wrongs and bias, encouraged me to grow and expand my thinking, besides making herself available to painstakingly correct and give direction to my writings. The phrase 'Thank you' does not seem sufficient but it is said with appreciation and respect.

I would like to thank the teachers in the Centre for Social Systems for the many years of patient teachings and for training me to be a sociologist—Ma'am Tiplut Nongbri, Sir M.N. Panini, Ma'am V. Sujata, Sir Avijit Pathak, Ma'am Renuka Singh, Sir Surinder Singh Jodhka, Sir Vivek Kumar, Ma'am Maitrayee Chaudhuri, Sir Ehsanul Haq, Ma'am Nilika Mehrotra, Sir Anand Kumar and Sir Dipanker Gupta. My sincere gratitude to the administrative staffs of the Sociology Department office in JNU— Mrs. Anita, Mrs. Suman, Mrs. Rajni, Mr. Jhanjiani, Mr. Negi, Mr. Bharat and Mr. Bhupinder.

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Library (New Delhi), Ratan Tata Library, Delhi University (New Delhi), Vidyajyoti Library (New Delhi), Nehru Memorial Library (New Delhi), French Information Research Centre Library (New Delhi), Centre for Study of Social Systems, JNU (New Delhi), Serampore College Library (Kolkata), National Library (Kolkata), The Asiatic Society (Kolkata), Bishop College Library (Kolkata), Manipur University Library (Imphal), Manipur State Archive (Imphal), Tribal Research Centre (Imphal), Indian Council of Social Science Research—North Eastern Regional Centre (Shillong) and Indira Gandhi Memorial Library (Hyderabad) were the libraries that I visited for the materials in the thesis. The librarians in these libraries were helpful in assisting me to get the materials that I need in their library. I am indebted to all of them for their kind assistance.

I thank Rev. Lalchungnunga (Principal) and Dr. Peter Singh (Vice Principal) for allowing me to access the Serampore Theological College Library and for providing accommodation in the campus guest house. I also thank Dr. Rev. Letthang Haokip, Mr. Ngamkhothang Haokip and all my newfound friends in Serampore Theological College—Mr. Liankholal, Mr. Mangkholien Misao, Mr. Seimang, Mr. Sehminlal, Mr. Khupgo, Mr. Jangmang, Mr. Jeddi, Mr. Senfilstar Nongkinrih, Mr. Isaac Hmar, Ms. Viola and Ms. Salomi for making my stay in Kolkata, comfortable while collecting colonial writings (administrators and missionaries' accounts) on the Kukis for my thesis.

During the course of fieldwork, I am thankful for the help and hospitality I received in Tujang Vaichong Village, Motbung Village and Kangpokpi Urban Town. I went to learn

about facts for my thesis, but I ended up learning a lot more about life than I had ventured to find. I enjoyed the company of the aged population, but it is with sad resignation that pastor Satkholal of Motbung village died before this thesis could see the light of the day. The chief Mrs. Konkhochong Kipgen shared with me valuable information on the history and present condition of her village besides opening the village records for me. Mr. Enoch Kipgen, the village headmaster, gave me the essential assistance and useful information on the applications of the customary laws and the day-to-day activities of the village. The villagers were open and warm to me and were eager to act as useful informants for my study. Mr. Lalkholun Sitlhou and his wife Paneng not only hosted me but they both patiently narrated about the issues and history of the village in the evenings as we sat around the fireplace, as is the custom in every house.

I thank Mr. Kaikhosei Lhouvum for the valuable time of discussion that I had with him and for opening Motbung village for my study. I am indebted to the *Motbung Semang-Pachong Village Authority* (village council) for allowing me to break the norms on my behalf in allowing me to be one of the few women to sit in the proceeding of the customary law court. The villagers were supportive of my research work and assisted me in procuring whatever data I needed for my thesis. I am thankful to Aunty Nengcha Singsit for introducing me to the Women society leaders and cultural specialists in Motbung and for accompanying me in many walks around the village. I am grateful to my uncle Mr. S.L. Vumkhopao and my cousins Mr. Paogin and Hoinu for helping me in procuring the necessary data as well as clarifying concepts and facts about the society under study.

I am indebted to Mr. Haokholien Guite, Chairman of the KUTC and Mrs. Hechin Haokip, president of the KWWO for their valuable. I am indebted to Pastor Lenpu Singson, Mr. Kamkhothang Lhouvum and Ms. Niengboi who took turns in accompanying me to conduct household surveys in all the fifteen localities of Kangpokpi Urban Town. I want to thank all the locality leaders who assisted me during the course of my field survey. My own mother Mrs. Zakimi assisted me whenever I had to interview a respected personality in the society and my brother Ronald Khumminthang accompanied me in terrains which were considered dangerous for women either due to geographical landscape or the assumed presence of militant groups.

I am grateful to Mr. Luntinsat Kipgen, Mr. Letkhomang Haokip and Ngamkholen Haokip for offering ready assistance whenever I needed clarification on cultural terminologies and materials and folkloric beliefs. I thank Mr. Nehginpao Kipgen for taking time out to carefully proof-read the chapters of my thesis, check the referencing and for offering critical comments. I thank my fellow scholars (L) Jimmy Jamkhomang Haokip, Dr. Jangkhomang Guite, Mr. Ronald Thangeo, Mr. Ngamminlun Kipgen, Mr. Don Morgan Kipgen, Dr. Shimreiyung Awungsi and Mr. Ngamjahao Kipgen for sharing valuable ideas and materials on my area of study.

There were people who made this journey easier with words of encouragement. I appreciate Ms. Sanjeevini Badigar and Dr. John Thomas for the time of discourse on theoretical materials and its application when I was unable to understand them on my own. I am grateful to my special extended family, the JNU-KWS prayer cell members for the moral support they have rendered to me during the trying years.

I am indebted to my wonderful parents – (L) Lalkholun Sitlhou and Zakimi for pushing me to achieve the dreams that they had set for themselves. I thank my mom for her consistent support throughout my academic life despite her own failing health. My siblings, Lalthangmoi, Kamkhothang, Khumminthang and Christina and my uncle Mr. Seiminpao have been there whenever I needed them. I thank my ever supportive friends: Ruth Nengneilhing, Lhingboi Dounghel, Chongboi Chongthu, Neneo Haokip and Sompu Gangte for encouraging me to see through many of life's serious debacles. I had the most unforgettable moments shared with the Sabarmati Hostel gang – Kaya, Sherin, Lienza, Thethem, Shruti, Mary, Bibi, Sanjeevini, Ruth, Shyni, Luni, U Dinny, U Lianboi and Mangcha, where I had stayed all the five years as a PhD student in JNU campus.

Lastly but in no way the least, I am grateful to God for bringing me this far and for making all this possible.

Abbreviations of acts, institutions and organisations used in the thesis –

1. AAM – Arthington Aborigines Mission
2. ABFM – American Baptist Foreign Mission
3. ABM – American Baptist Mission
4. ADC – Additional Deputy Commissioner
5. ADC – Autonomous District Council
6. ATSUM – All Tribal Student Union Manipur
7. CDSU – Churachandpur District Student Union
8. COPTAM – Committee on Protection of Tribal Areas
9. DC – Deputy Commissioner
10. E.E. – Executive Engineer
11. HAC – Hill Areas Committee
12. IBTKPM – Indo-Burma Thado (Thadou) Kookie (Kukis) Pioneer Mission
13. KBC – Kuki Baptist Convention (Tujang Vaichong Church)
14. KCC – Kangpokpi Christian Church
15. KCC – Kangpokpi Christian Church
16. KNA – Kuki National Assembly
17. KUTC – Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee
18. KWVO – Kangpokpi Women’s Welfare Organisation
19. MADC – Manipur Autonomous District Council
20. MARSAC – Manipur Remote Sensing Application Centre
21. MBC – Motbung Baptist Church (Motbung Church)
22. MLAs – Manipur Legislative Assemblies
23. MLR &LR – Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms, 1960
24. MSCP – Manipur State Congress Party
25. NEI – North East India
26. NGOs – Non-Governmental Organisations
27. NH – National Highway
28. NREGA – National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
29. PWD – Public Work Department
30. SDO – Sub Divisional Officer
31. SHDDC – Sadar Hills District Demand Committee
32. SHKCO – Sadar Hills Kuki Chief Organisation
33. SP – Superintendent of Police
34. SSDC – Sixth Schedule Demand Committee
35. TBC – Thadou Baptist Church (Motbung Church)
36. TD – Tribal Development
37. TPFM – Tribal’s People Forum, Manipur
38. UPA – United Progressive Alliance

Names of the Official Members of the Organisations Studied

Kangpokpi Urban Town

1. Members of Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation (KWWO)

- President -Hechin Haokip
- General Secretary – Helam Kipgen
- Assistant Secretary – Hatnu Khongsai & Hoinu Kipgen
- Vice President – Hoilam Khongsai & Lhaichong Lhouvum
- Treasurer – Mawii Singsit

Besides, the five core leadership positions given above, there are the elected executive members who help the office bearers. Each of them is nominated from the fifteen different wards of Kangpokpi. The localities are termed 'ward' and there are fifteen such wards in Kangpokpi town. All the fifteen wards in Kangpokpi elect two to three executives as representatives. They are obliged to attend meetings. Their leadership can be declared annulled if they fail to attend two consecutive meetings.

Ward 1 – Neikim Hangshing and Hatkholam Lhouvum

Ward 2 – Nengneihing Hangshing

Ward 3 – Hatnu Khongsai and Lamneng Chongloi

Ward 4 – Chongcha Haolai

Ward 5 -- Hevei Haokip and Mawii Singsit

Ward 6 -- Hevah Khongsai

Ward 7 – Hevei chongloi and Hoikholhing Haokip and Kimnei Sitlhou

Ward 8 – Kimboi Lhouvum and Nengcha Sailo

Ward 9 and Ward 10 – did not elect representatives

Ward 11-- Lhingcha Gangte and Lamnem Kipgen

Ward 12 – Anem Singson and Hoikhonem Guite

Ward 13 – Heshi Chongloi and Lhaichong Lhouvum

Ward 14--Kholneikim Kipgen

Ward 15 – no representative

Term of leadership: 2007-2010

2. Kangpokpi Christian Church (Women Society)

- Chairman – Hoivah Singson
- Vice Chairman – Lamchin Guite
- Secretary – Hoineilhing chongloi
- Assistant Secretary – Lhaichin Kipgen

Executive members: Hoilam Khongsai, Nemkholam Misao, Chinkim Khongsai, Lhaikhohat Khongsai, Chongkholhing Hangshing, Lhaikhokim Khongsai, Kimlhai lunkim, Nengkhokim Misao, Hoivah Singson, and Lhaikhchin Kipgen.

3. Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee

- Chairman – Mr. Haokholien Guite
- Vice Chairman – Mr. Lamkam Kipgen
- Secretary – Chonkam Kipgen
- Assistant Secretary--Thangboi Gangte
- Treasurer--Jangthang Chongloi

Executive members:--

Ward 1--Letngam Haokip

Ward 2--K. Amang

Ward 3-- N.J. Thangboi

Ward 4--Lamkam Kipgen

Ward 5– Sehngul Gangte

Ward 6– Lalsat Haokip

Ward 7– Angam Thanga

Ward 8-- Ngamkhohao Haokip

Ward 9– Jangthang Chongloi

Ward 10--Thangboi Gangte

Ward 11--Donglam Singsit

Ward 12– Lalsat Haokip

Ward 13– Hensei Lhouvum

Ward 14– Thanglun Khongsai

Ward 15--Prasad Dhal

Tujang Vaichong Village

1. Village Authority leaders –

- Lunkhohen Kipgen (Haosapu)
- Paominlien Gangte (Semang)
- Seiminlal Kipgen (Secretary)
- Vumjahao Sitlhou (member)
- Thenkholal Guite (member)
- Paolam Kipgen (Member)
- Sehminlien Gangte (Member) (NREGA)
- Otkhosat Lupheng (Member)

- Lettinmang Kipgen (Member)
- Paokhohen Hangshing (Member) (NREGA)

2. Kuki Baptist Convention (Women Society)

- Nemneilhing Sitlhou (Chairperson)
- Lamchin Kipgen (Secretary)
- Nengkhohoi Kipgen (Treasurer)
- Ngahneilam Doungel (member)
- Phalneineng Guite (member)
- Chinkhohoi Saum (member)
- Kimchin Kipgen (member)

3. Women Union

- Phalneineng Guite (Chairperson)
- Nemjachin Sitlhou (Secretary)
- Lhingkhovah Sitlhou (Treasurer)
- Nengkhohing Kipgen (member)
- Nenglamkim Kipgen (member)
- Chingthem Khiangte (member)

Motbung

1. Motbung Baptist Church (Women Society Members)

- Mrs. Neithem Sitlhou (Chairperson)
- Mrs. Nengneichong Sitlhou (Secretary)

- Mrs. Nemhoi Lhouvum (Accountant)
- Mrs. Nengjakim Lhouvum (Treasurer)

Executive Members:--

- Mrs. Lhingkhonei Simte
- Mrs. Tingneilam Lhouvum
- Mrs. Tingneilhing Lhouvum

Locality Representatives:--

- Mrs. Veikholhing Singson (*Phoipi Area*)
- Mrs. Lhingkhohat Misao (“ ”)
- Mrs. Hoilam Kipgen (*Aithuh Area*)
- Mrs. Hatneilhing Lhouvum (*Bethlehem Area*)
- Mrs. Lhingneikim Haolai (“ ”)
- Mrs. Nengdim Sitlhou (*Lhungjang Area*)
- Mrs. Phalhoi Singsit (“ ”)
- Mrs. Nengneikim Sitlhou (*Sharon Area*)
- Mrs. Phalneihoi Lhouvum (*Salem Area*)
- Mrs. Lhingjahat Lhouvum (*Inpi Area*)
- Mrs. Neichong Sitlhou (*Nazareth Area*)
- Mrs. Hatkhonem Lhouvum (“ ”)
- Mrs. Nemkholam Sitlhou (“ ”)
- Mrs. Vahneihoi Lhouvum (*Luikhuh Area*)

- Mrs. Veilam Khongsai (“ Bethel veng)

2. Village Authority Members (Name and Post Held)

- Mr. S.L. Lamthang – Chairman
- Mr. Nguljathang Guite – Secretary
- Mr. S.L. Vumkhopao – Joint Secretary
- Mr. S.K. Helthang – Accountant
- Mr. S.L. Chongsat – Custom
- Mr. S.L. Tongkholam – Forest
- Mr. S.L. Mangkholun – Forest
- Mr. Kaivum Sitlhou – Defence
- Mr. S.L. Letsat – Member
- Mr. Lamsem Singsit – Member
- Mr. Haosat Singsit – Member
- Mr. S.H. Haokholal Singsit – Member
- Mr. Kh. Thanggoulen – Mikou (Khosam) (Information Secretary)

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The present study, *Land and Identity: A Sociological Study of the Thadou-Kuki Tribes of Manipur* will explore the socio-political construction of space amongst the Hill Tribes, particularly the Thadou-Kukis of Manipur. The issue of land, territoriality and identity has been a contentious subject in the state. The Hill areas accounts for 90 percent of the geographical area. The density of population in the valley was 631 per sq km in 2001 as against the density of population of only 44 per sq km in the hill areas (Singh (ed.), 2009, p. ix). Increasing pressure on land has led to distinctive struggle for identity and territorial claim, not only between the hills and valley areas but also amongst the hill communities.

Manipur's population has three major ethnic groups: the Meiteis of the valley, the Nagas and Kukis¹(Grierson, G.A. 1967, p. 1) of the surrounding hills. The Thadou's are the sub tribe of the Kuki community of Manipur. They are the most numerous branch of the Kuki group. As per the 1991 census of the distribution of population in Manipur by mother tongue, they constituted the second most populated tribe with 1,00,230 speakers of the dialect.² The study will use the compromised term "Thadou-Kuki" to refer to the Thadou dialect-speaking group of the Kuki community. In Manipur, the Kuki affiliated tribes are dispersed over the five hill districts, with larger concentrations in Churachandpur, Senapati and Chandel districts (Ray, 1990). The universe of study is in three areas that falls within the Sadar Hills Autonomous District

¹ G.A. Grierson writes that the words 'Kuki' and 'Chin' are synonymous and are both used for the hill tribes. Chin is a Burmese word to denote the various hill tribes living in the country between Burma and the (then) Provinces of Assam and Bengal (Grierson, 1967). The word 'Zo' is another term that has come up to defined the same group of people in the modern day. The supporters of the term 'Zo' regarded the name Kuki or Chin or Kuki-Chin as name given to them by their neighbours or employed by the ethnographers to identify the whole cluster of groups of people (Lam Khan Piang, 2005). However, there are still many who oppose the relevance of the term 'Zo' as a basis for unification and has continued to uphold the old name of 'Kuki' or "Chin".

² Population of Manipur, 2008, Directorate of economics and Statistics, Government of Manipur, Imphal

Council Area of Senapati District; namely Tujang Vaichong Village, Motbung Village and Kangpokpi Urban Town respectively.

The focus of study will be on the impact of British colonialism, post-colonial debates on land, and land related issues. Over a period, various agencies have contributed in the re-ordering and changes in the society. First, it was the laws and policies of the British imperialist: both administrators and missionaries and then that of the modern state. It will try to trace the varied instruments of colonialism that changed the traditional structure and impedes the principality that governs the Thadou-Kuki society. The synchronic question “what there is” based on fieldwork and observation gives a sense of contemporary societies (Saberwal, 2001, p. 33). To enlarge our understanding of phenomena, we also need to take into consideration the pre-colonial and colonial era or “How did it come to be?” This concerns becoming, a diachronic question, which takes us into processes, which were active in the past, stretched over various time horizons (ibid).

The term ‘land’ does not only mean the geographical meaning of it, but also includes “the people of a country”. In definitions like this, we find the term is made more human and it is precisely this aspect of land that will be of interest to sociologists. A person’s appointed and culturally defined place on his soil, his territorial citizenship, his type of residence, and those rights which underlie the various uses of his soil form an organic whole which in turn defined him and constitute and determine his identity. The research would centre on the close affinity between land and culture and illustrate how in the tribal realm the study of land would automatically unveil the sociological questions of identity, power, hierarchy, property, inheritance, status, kinship network, gender relations, livelihood and economy.

Review of Literature

1. Nature and Culture

Social ecology is the study of the interdependence of the biophysical and socio-cultural domains (Guha, 1998, p. 5). The ecological infrastructures of human society are soil, water, fauna, climate, etc. (ibid, p. 5). The relationship between 'nature' and 'culture' has been studied either in terms of their interdependence by social ecologists or as a binary opposition by eco-feminist and structural anthropologists like Levi-Strauss. "Mukherjee emphasizes that the relationship between nature and culture is both interactive and dynamic, with humans trying to mould the environment to their own ends but always having to work within the limits set by nature (Guha, 1998, pp. 19-20)." In studying man-land relations, the thesis focuses on the 'interdependency' aspect of the relationship to study the influence of nature on the social structure as also on how the social structure in turn influences the conceptualisation of the ecological relations.

Man's affinity with his place of settlement is explained by Evans-Pritchard (1969) via the definition of tribe in his book, 'The Nuer: A Description of the modes of livelihood and political institution of a Nilotic People.' According to him a tribe is a group of people having: "(1) a common and distinct name; (2) a common sentiment; (3) a common and distinct territory; (4) a moral obligation to unite in war; (5) a moral obligation to settle feuds and other disputes by arbitration (Evans-pritchard, 1969, p. 122)." Each tribe is comprised of a dominant clan and the relation between the lineage structure of this clan and the territory system of the tribe is of great structural importance (ibid).

Robert S. Anderson and Walter Huber in their book, 'The Hour of the Fox,' gave a vivid picture of the close relationship between tribe and forest:

To a vast number of the tribal people the forest is their well-loved home, their livelihood, their very existence. It gives them food – fruits of all kinds, edible leaves, honey, nourishing roots, wild game and fish. It provides them with material to

build their homes and practise their arts. By exploiting its produce they can supplement their meagre incomes. It keeps them warm with its fuel and cool with its grateful shade. Their religion leads them to [make]...special sacrifices to the forest gods; in many places offerings are made to a tree before and after hunting...it is striking to see how in many of the myths and legends the deep sense of identity with the forest is emphasised. From time immemorial...the tribal people enjoyed the freedom to use the forest and hunt its animals and this has given them a conviction, which remains even today in their hearts that the forest belongs to them (Anderson et al, 1988, p. 36).

Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss in, 'Primitive Classification,' discuss the symbolic classifications prevalent in the society. No society is really simple but is complex each in its own way and everything is gendered, not only with regard to human relationships but the categories that people use to classify each element of the social systems. This is then reflected in the practices that orient the social structure and is manifested in the hierarchies embedded in the society (Durkheim et al., 1975). Humans' classify things because they were themselves divided into clans (ibid, p. 82). These classifications are modelled on the closest and the most fundamental form of social organisation (ibid). Therefore, the social organisation influences the functioning of the logical operations or the classification of things (ibid). "All nature is divided into class names and said to be male and female. The sun and moon and stars are said to be men and women, and to belong to classes just as the blacks themselves (ibid, p. 12)." All these constituted systems of hierarchized notions (ibid, p. 81).

Similarly, in 'Coral Gardens and their Magic: Soil-tilling and Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands,' Malinowski wrote about the imposing tendencies of man on nature. The relation between man and soil on the one hand transforms the land. On the one hand, human beings subdivide land, classify and apportion it, surround it with legal ideas, with sentiments and with mythological beliefs. On the other hand, their very relation to the soil also constrained them and shapes their existence. So, human beings live in families, work in village

communities, produce in teams, become organised by a common belief and common ritual of a magical character (Malinowski, 1966, p. 376). Thus, the relationship integrates human beings into a number of social units and transforms the soil from a merely physical into a culturally determined object (ibid, p. 341). Therefore, Mukerjee rightly says that man's mastery of his region consists not in a one-sided exploitation but in a mutual give and take and this alone could keep alive the never-ending cycle of the region's life processes (Mukerjee, 1998, p. 23).

The theory of symbolic classification is also applicable to the different form of social differentiation existing in the Indian social structure. In a complex society like India, there are different modes of productive organisation that gives rise to differing rights, duties and obligations, leading to particular patterns of property rights (Singh, 2009, p. 112-136). The right in the soil and the land tenure systems is different under the Caste System and the Chieftainship system of the Tribals. The land system and settlement pattern in most Indian villages are governed by the rules of hierarchy under the caste system which in turn influence the distribution of rights and privileges (as cited in Mandavdhare (ed.), 1993, P. 78). On the other hand, the land system of the hill tribes of Manipur, especially the subject of our study, the Thadou-Kukis' is largely still governed by the chieftainship system. Under this system, the whole village is under the chief who acts as the overseer and accordingly distribute plots of land to the villagers.

Moreover, the rights to land in the Thadou-Kuki villages are gendered by the custom and tradition of the society. Women do not have equal access to land as the men despite the fact that the tribal societies are largely understood to be egalitarian in nature. Bina Agarwal in, 'A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia,' advocated the importance of individual ownership in promoting the well-being and empowerment of women. She asked the crucial questions: "Which organizational forms of landownership and control and institutional support structures could help establish women's effective command over the land they claim? What legal reforms are still necessary? Would a greater

female presence in public decision-making bodies help promote rural women's concerns? What would strengthen women's ability to bargain with the community and the State and within the household (ibid, p. 467)?" Agarwal suggested many points for the struggle to attain social legitimacy of women's claim for independent resources like land including – bargaining with the state (ibid, p. 496) and increasing women's presence in public decision-making forums (ibid, p. 499). Many other scholars like Nitya Rao (2005), Smita Tewari Jassal (2001), M. Indira (2007), Tiplut Nongbri (2003), Kelkar and Nathan (1993) and Madhu Sarin (2003) also wrote on the question of woman access to land. Though they wrote about different context and locations, the underlying message is the same – women marginalisation and lack of autonomy over land.

Another concept that has been widely used to analyse the nature-culture relationship in the thesis is the concept of 'reciprocity' given by George E. "Tink" Tinker in his book, "American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty". He posits four fundamental cultural differences between American Indian people as against the European people (Tinker, 2008, p. 7). They are: spatially as opposed to temporality; attachment to particular lands or territory; the priority of community over the individual; and a consistent notion of the interrelatedness of humans and the rest of creation (ibid).

Contrary to the biblical creation story of the Christians which sees human beings as privileged over the rest of creation, in American Indian cultures, there is no privileging of human beings in the scheme of things in the world (ibid, p. 66). Yet there are expectations of human beings towards his fellows in the created realm: from bears and squirrels to eagles and sparrows, trees, ants, rocks, and mountains (ibid). This is where the concept of "reciprocity" comes in. "Reciprocity involves first of all a spiritual understanding of the cosmos and the place of humans in the processes of the cosmic whole. It begins with an understanding that everything that humans do has effect on the rest of the world around us. Even when we cannot clearly know what the effect is in any particular act, we know that there is an effect (ibid, p.68)." The knowledge that

our every action has a corresponding affect necessitates the need to formulate a compensation of some form or some act of reciprocity (ibid, p. 68).

This necessity for reciprocity applies where there are necessary acts of violence as in hunting or harvesting (ibid). This is relevant to activities like harvesting of vegetable foods such as corn or the harvesting of medicinal such as cedar, even when only part of a plant is taken (ibid). "The ideal of harmony and balance requires that all share a respect for all other existent things, a respect for life and the avoidance of gratuitous or unthinking acts of violence. Maintaining harmony and balance requires that even necessary acts of violence be done "in a sacred way". Thus, nothing is taken from the earth without prayer and offering (ibid, p. 70)." These ceremonies of 'reciprocity' are often wrongly interpreted by missionaries who thought of these ceremonies as vain human attempts to placate some angry deity. In truth, they are sacrifices engaged in for the sake of the whole community's well-being (ibid, p. 69). The concept of reciprocity, which is a hallmark of most American Indian ceremonies, goes to the heart of issues of 'sustainability' which aims at maintaining a balance and tempering the negative affects of basic human survival techniques (ibid, p. 70).

2. Culture Ecology

Environmental influence on the cultural life of people has been widely studied in different societies. The classical work of anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski on the Trobriand Islanders (1972, 1982, 1966, 1960), Marcel Mauss on the Eskimos (1979), Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer society of Sudan in Egypt (1969), Raymond Firth on the Polynesian society of Tikopia in Solomon Islands (1957, 1959) and Levi-Strauss's (1970) study of binary opposition of nature and culture are some of the studies conducted on the impact of the environment on the cultural life of the people, thus, revealing the close sentiment between land and man.

Marcel Mauss in "Seasonal Variations of the Eskimos" argues based on his study that the limitation on Eskimos settlements depends on the way in which the

environment acts, not on the individual, but on the group as a whole (Mauss, 1979, p. 35). In summer, individual Eskimo families live in tents, dispersed and scattered over an immense area; in winter, these families congregate in concentrated settlements composed of multi-family houses, often linked to one or more communal houses or *Kashim*, where collective ceremonies are performed (Mauss, 1979). Summer is marked by individualisation and winter by homogenisation.

Evans-Pritchard studies the Nuer society of Sudan in Egypt. The oecological (ecological) rhythm divides the Nuer year into two main divisions: the wet season when they live in villages and the dry season when they live in camps. The camp life falls into two parts, the earlier period of small, temporary camps and the later period of large concentrations in sites occupied every year (Evans-Pritchard, 1969, p. 93). Human social system, culture, religious values and economic pattern grew around the land. This is especially so in the case of the tribes of India whose source of sustenance is immediately from the forest products and produce.

For Evans-Pritchard, as he wrote in, "The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People," ecological space is more than mere physical distance, though it is affected by it (Evans-Pritchard, 1969, p. 109). The characters by which seasons are most clearly defined are those, which control the movements of the people: water, vegetation, movements of fish, & C (ibid, p.96). "Oecological (ecological) distance, in this sense, is a relation between communities defined in terms of density and distribution, and with reference to water, vegetation, animal and insect life, and so on (ibid, p. 109)." The time of a notable event is referred to the activities of that time, such as the formation of the early cattle camps, the time of weeding, the time of harvesting, and so on (ibid, p. 100). Likewise daily activities are timed by what Evans-Pritchard has called the 'cattle clock' (ibid, p. 101). The passage of time through the day is marked by the succession of tasks, which constitute the pastoral daily regime, and this is

used to coordinate their actions (ibid, pp. 100- 101). 'I shall return at milking', 'I shall start off when the calves come home,' and so forth (ibid, p. 102).

The Nuer year is divided into two seasons, *tot* and *mai*, but the terms refers to the cluster of social activities characteristic of the height of the dry season and the depths of the rainy season. In this sense, Nuer may use the words as verbs in utterances such as 'going to *tot* (or *mai*)' in a certain place (ibid, p. 95). The times correspond to localities, to village residence and to residence in the cattle camps. Thus, his main concern was the influence of ecological relations on the institutions of the society.

Savyasaachi (1991) studied the cultural ecology of the Koitors who lived in the forest of Abujhmar in Bastar in Madhya Pradesh. For him, a change towards modernization does not necessarily mean an improvement in the living conditions of marginalised peoples. "Under the protectionist policy the process of social modernisation of tribals in India has been mediated primarily by groups of Hindu landlords, money-lenders and Christian missionaries. As regards economic modernisation, in general the tribal people over a period of time came into direct relation with the state with reference to land, forest and shifting cultivation (Savyasaachi, 1991, p. 260)." The protectionist policy does not recognise the possibility that man and forest can constitute a living space. It does not protect the forest for the Koitor but protects it for commercial exploitation. The Koitor participation to the market economy reduced them to unskilled labourers (ibid). In fact, the ban on shifting cultivation is destructive as they fail to provide an alternative mode of livelihood to the shifting cultivators (Savyasaachi, 1991). The policy labelled those engaged in shifting cultivation as "relics of a pre-historic age" (ibid, p. 262).

Savyasaachi (2001) in the article, "Forest Dwellers and Tribals in India," took the case of the Onges of Andaman Islands to describe how ritual identifies those elements that transform a place into living space. "The competition for 'place' between the Onges and the spirits is the basis of their movement across 'space'

(Savyasaachi, 2001, p. 86).” It is their notion of work for self-sustenance like gathering food which shapes their living space (ibid). They believe that, although spirits, humans, and animals share a common space, it is through their different capacities for movement that each remains alive within their different places within that space (ibid). This space is shared between nature (including humans) and supernatural (including spirits), and between human beings and non-human beings (ibid, p. 87).

Ramachandra Guha in, “The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya”, studied the Kumaun and Garhwal region of Uttarakhand in India. He brings out the crucial relationship between colonialism and ecological decline through the introduction of commercial or scientific forestry. He argued that ecological history cannot merely be the history of changes in landscape. Ecological history ought to link environmental changes with changing, and competing, human perceptions of the ‘uses’ of nature (ibid, pp. ix-x). The Chipko Movement was primarily a peasant movement in defence of traditional rights in the forest and only secondarily, if at all, an ‘environmental’ or ‘feminist’ movement (ibid, p. viii). The traditional customary uses of the forest like ‘the lopping of trees and grazing, and the burning of the forest floor for fresh crop of grasses were curtailed because they were a serious threat to rationalized timber production (ibid, pp. 49-50). This led to Alienation of humans from nature. The loss of community ownership had effectively broken the link between humans and the forest (ibid, p.55). “Although the government had, in certain areas, made over limited tracts of forests to the villagers (the so-called ‘third class’ or ‘village’ forests) the proviso in the forest act that these forests must first be declared ‘reserved’ strengthened suspicion of the state’s true intentions (ibid, 55-56).”

Another important question asked by the book which is relevant for our thesis is—whether it is possible to relate the subordinate position of women in Uttarakhand to the enthusiastic support given by them to the Chipko Andolan (ibid, p. 109). The popular conception of Chipko is that of a romantic reunion of

humans, especially women, with nature (ibid, p. 173). “The dramatic act—often threatened but rarely brought into play—of hugging the tree to save it from the contractor’s axe is the chief characteristic with which the movement is identified (ibid).” The hill women traditionally bore an extremely high share of family labour. They collect fodder, firewood and carry water, which form their main chores besides farming (p. 169). Their participation in Chipko (movement) may be partly due to an outcome of the increasing difficulty with which the tasks was accomplished in the deteriorating environment caused by deforestation (ibid, p. 175). The movement also shows the local people attachment to and dependence on the forest for their livelihood.

Clifford Geertz in, “Agricultural Involution: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia,” introduce the concept of ‘involution’ to describe those culture patterns which, after having reached what would seem to be a definitive form, nonetheless fail either to stabilize or transform themselves into a new pattern but rather continue to develop by becoming internally more complicated (ibid, p. 80-81). Geertz gave the example of the Javanese cane worker. The Javanese cane worker remained a peasant at the same time that he became a coolie and persisted as a community-oriented household farmer at the same time that he became an industrial wage labourer. So, he had one foot in the rice terrace and the other on the mill (ibid, p. 89). In order for him to maintain this dual and uncomfortable stance, the estate has to adapt to the village through the land-lease system and various other “native-protection” devices forced on it by an ‘ethical’ colonial government, but, even more comprehensively, the village had to adapt to the estate (ibid, pp. 89-90). This mode of adaptation can be termed as “involutional”. In the process, the basic pattern of village life was maintained and in some ways even strengthened, and the adjustment to the impingements of high capitalism affected through the complication of established institutions and practices (ibid, p. 90).

In land tenure, in crop regime, in work organization, and in the less directly economic aspects of social structure as well, the village faced the problem posed

by rising population, increased monetization, greater dependence on the market, mass labour organization, more intimate contact with bureaucratic government and the like. However, this did not lead to a “dissolution of the traditional pattern into an individualistic ‘rural proletarian’ anomie, nor yet by a metamorphosis of it into a modern commercial farming community” (ibid, p. 90). Geertz named this form of society as “post-traditional” (ibid).

In a similar line, Pierre Bourdieu’s book, ‘Outline of a Theory of Practice,’ is an ethnographic study on the agricultural cycle of the Kabylia people of Algeria. The ‘door of the year’ is the first day of ploughing and is considered the most decisive turning point of the transitional period (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 100). On the first day, each family sacrifices a cock, and associations and contracts are renewed (ibid). Then, there is the slack season or the dry season of the year (ibid). Ploughing and sowing begins immediately after the inaugural ceremony (which is also a rain-making rite), as soon as the land is sufficiently moist and this activity may go on until mid-December or even longer, depending on the region and the year (ibid). After the crops are harvested, there is also a period devoted to rest and to the celebrations of a plentiful harvest (ibid, p. 104). Bourdieu wrote about the significance of agricultural calendars in the agricultural life of a community.

Just as genealogy substitutes a space of unequivocal, homogenous relationships, established once and for all, for a spatially and temporally discontinuous set of islands of kinship, ranked and organised to suit the needs of the moment and brought up practical existence gradually and intermittently, and just as a map replaces the discontinuous, patchy space of geometry, so a calendar substitutes a linear, homogenous, continuous time for practical time, which is made up of incommensurable islands of duration, each with its own rhythm, the time that flies by or drags, depending on what one is doing, i.e. on the functions conferred on it by the activity in progress. By distributing ‘guide-marks’ (ceremonies and tasks) along a continuous line, one turns them into ‘dividing marks’ united in a relation of simple succession, thereby creating ex nihilo the question of the intervals and

correspondences between points which are no longer topologically but metrically equivalent (ibid, p. 105).

3. Identity as a Changing Processes

Among the classical sociological theorists, one finds detailed references to the question of identity in the writings of Charles Horton Cooley and George H. Mead. Charles Horton Cooley developed his concept of "the looking glass-self", in his book, "Human Nature and the Social Order." He formed the idea of 'self' through the process of introspection (Cooley, 1922). The kind of self-feeling a person has is determined by the attitude toward this attributed to that other mind (ibid, pp. 184-185). A social self of this type is called the reflected or looking-glass self (ibid, p. 184). The self-idea has three principal elements: "the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgement of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification (ibid, p. 184)." For him, self-consciousness and social consciousness are inseparable.

The concept of 'self' and 'I' also takes a central place in the work of George H. Mead. In his work, "Mind, Self and Society," Mead refers to the transformation of the biologic individual to the minded organism or self. According to Mead, the quality, which marks out man from other animal, is that they have mind through which they can gain control over the others. This takes place through the agency of language, and language in turn pre-supposes the existence of a certain kind of society (Mead, 1972). "The self has a character, which is different from that of the physiological organism proper. The self is something, which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process (Mead, 1972, p. 135)." The essence of the self is cognitive: "it lies in the internalized conversation of gestures, which constitutes thinking, or in terms of

which thought or reflection proceeds (ibid, p. 173).” Hence, the origin and foundations of the self as in the case of thinking are social (ibid).

Porta and Diani stresses on the importance of collective action in the formation of identity. The construction of identity cannot be simply reduced to psychological mechanisms; it is a social process (Porta et. al, 1999, p. 85). They wrote that identity is not an immutable characteristic, pre-existing action. In other words, the evolution of collective action produces and encourages continuous redefinitions of identity (ibid, p. 87). With collective identity less dependent on direct, face-to-face interactions and more dependent on the media system and the telemetric revolution, (ibid, p. 88) the existing differences between the concept and meaning of space, land and even territory have increased in the present century. Erik H. Erickson recognised the impact of the society on the individual’s identity formation. He spoke of identity formation as a process located in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture (Erikson, 1968, p. 22). Another powerful aspect of social identities agreed upon by nearly all theorists is their historicity, or their evolutionary, and de-evolutionary, developments (Alcoff, 2003, p. 3).

We have discussed identity theories from a more individual level to a broader collective definition and that identities are capable of changing when influenced by its environment. The next identity questions that need to be understood for the purpose of our study are—“how are they formed, and how can they be transformed? Are identities simply the congealed effect of collective historical experience, or are they imposed on individuals from external forces, always within a strategy of domination? (Alcoff, 2003, p. 2).” For Linda Martin Alcoff, individuals make their own identity, but this may not necessarily happen under conditions of their own choosing. Identities are often created in the crucible of colonialism, racial and sexual subordination, and national conflicts, but also in the specificity of group histories and structural position (ibid, p. 3).

4. Cultural Identity and Colonial Discourse

In understanding the role played by colonial discourses in identity formation and its impact on the changes in land system of a Thadou-Kuki society, let us look at the postcolonial theories that will be relevant for our study. “‘Post-colonial,’ with its double meaning, denotes ‘after colonialism’ as well as the continuation of colonially produced social structures and cultural perceptions (Perera, 1998, p. 3).” “Colonial discourse is a system of statements that can be made about colonies and colonial peoples, about colonising powers and about the relationship between these two. It is a system of knowledge and belief about the world within which acts of colonisation take place. Although, it is generated within the society and cultures of the colonisers, it becomes that discourse within which the colonised may also come to see themselves (as cited in Ashcroft et al, pp. 62-63).”

Based on his experiences as a Christian Palestinian having an American citizen and a resident of New York City, Edward Said demonstrated the paradoxical nature of identity in an increasingly migratory and globalised world (Ashcroft et al, 2002, p. 4). He insisted that all cultures are changing constantly, that culture and identity themselves are processes (ibid, p. 5). For Said, “identity is not static but is something that ‘each age and society re-creates...over historical, social, intellectual and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions’ (ibid, p. 112-113)”.

“Orientalism” is the generic term employed by Edward Said in his book “Orientalism” to describe the Western approach to the Orient. Orientalism is the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice (Said, 1978, p. 73). In addition Edward Said uses the word “orientalism” to designate that collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line (ibid). The Oriental is considered to be irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, “different”; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, “normal”

meaning that the Oriental is contained and represented by dominating frameworks (ibid, p. 40). "The division of the world into East and West had been centuries in the making and expressed the fundamental binary division on which all dealing with the Orient was based. But one side had the power to determine what the reality of both East and West might be (Ashcroft, 2002, p. 59)."

Edward Said in his book, "Culture and Imperialism," discuss the importance of culture in maintaining the hegemony of imperialism. Said's strategy for resistance elaborated through the term "voyage-in" encapsulates the two phases of decolonisation: "The first is the recovery of 'geographical territory', while the second is the 'changing of cultural territory'. Hence, primary resistance that involves 'fighting against outside intrusion' is succeeded by secondary resistance that entails ideological or cultural reconstitution (as cited in Ashcroft et al, 2002, p. 108)."

The Saidian strategy of resistance is the ability to make the 'voyage in', which is to write back to imperialism (Ashcroft et al, 2002, p. 116). "Said is adamant that rather than a 'politics of blame' which is ultimately backward-looking and self-defeating, post-colonial peoples may resist most effectively by engaging that dominant culture, by embarking on a 'voyage in', a powerful variety of hybrid cultural work which counters dominant culture without simply rejecting it (Ashcroft et al, 2002, p. 116)." These 'voyage in' represents a still unresolved contradiction or discrepancy within metropolitan culture, which through co-optation, dilution, and avoidance partly acknowledges and partly refuses the effort. The "voyage in" then constitutes an interesting variety of hybrid cultural work and is a sign of adversarial internationalization in an age of continued imperial structures (Said, 1994, p. 244).

The Post-Colonial critic Homi Bhabha in his book, 'The Location of Culture,' offers a deconstruction of racial difference. Bhabha argues that the racist or colonial discourse in the west is predicated upon a binary opposition between racial identities: west/east, white/ black, colonizer/colonized, with the first term

in each coupling privileged over the other. Unlike Edward Said's analysis which has been popular for several decades and which proposes a flat relation of domination and subordination, between the occident and orient, the work of Homi Bhabha has made the case that the relation between the colonizer and colonized is characterised by ambivalence (Seidman, 2001). The relation between the colonizer and colonized is a two-way exchange. It is not just an outside culture being imposed upon a colonial culture, but also the way colonies, despite their disempowerment and disadvantage, respond to that outside culture, and in many cases translate its imposition into acts of social insurgency and forms of culture innovation (Bhabha, 1994). He continues that the native subject, through the process, which might be described as psychological guerrilla warfare, can circumvent the operations of colonial power. Bhabha makes the analysis of the subjectivity of the colonizing experience, of its unconscious, central to the post - colonial experience (Seidman, 2001, p. 26).

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of "fixity" in the ideological construction of otherness (Bhabha, 2001, p. 388). "The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction (Bhabha, 1994, p. 70)." "The stereotype, then, as the primary point of subjectification in colonial discourses, for both colonizer and colonized, is the scene of similar fantasy and defence - the desire for an originality, which is again threatened by the differences of race, colour and culture (ibid, p. 75)." Bhabha said that the discourse of colonialism is frequently populated with 'terrifying stereotypes of savagery, cannibalism, lust and anarchy' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 70).

For Bhabha, 'Mimicry' emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge. "...Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite (ibid, p. 86)." Consequently, mimicry is "...the sign of a double

articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power (ibid)". Bhabha gives as his example, Macauley's infamous 'Minute' on Indian education in 1835, in which Macauley argued that the British in India needed a "...a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect- in other words a Mimic man raised 'through our English school', and as a missionary educationist wrote in 1819, 'to form a corps of translations and be employed in different departments of Labour (ibid, pp. 87)". The desire of colonial mimicry has a strategic objective, which Bhabha calls the "metonymy of presence". This refers to the inappropriate signifiers of colonial discourse like the discriminatory identities constructed across traditional cultural norms and classifications, the Simian Black, the Lying Asiatic (ibid, p. 90). Thus, the partial imitation subverts the identity of which is being represented, and the relations of power, if not wholly reversed, certainly begin to fluctuate.

Susan Visvanathan in her book, "Friendship, Interiority and Mysticism: Essays in Dialogue," wrote about the various ramifications of the Colonial discourses in India. The work of the missionaries often ran parallel to that of the colonial government (Visvanathan, 2007, p. 128). "The latter would legalise change when it became inevitable. The missionaries were catalysts in that they provided motivations and impulses to the possibilities of change (ibid)."

Another aspect of colonial discourse brought out by the book which is relevant to the thesis is the dialogue between the natives and the missionaries. "How should a native Christian continue to live as a Christian amongst his own people? How do you distinguish between the social and the religious? (ibid, p. 150). The engagement to Christianity often requires that the converts be in denial of their former world and worldview in order to conform to the colonizer's understanding of the world. Conversion as a change of heart and being is possible dialogically by a process of seeking and trying to understand the spiritual experience of the other (ibid, p. 160). In her article, "Missionary Styles

and the Problem of Dialogue,” Visvanathan writes about the dependence of the colonial missionary upon the native catechist. He assisted the missionary in the work of evangelization, in pastoral engagements and involvements, in education work as native teacher or master, in medical work as doctor and dresser, as translator and colporteur, and of course in Zenana work, as Bible woman, teacher and visitor (Visvanathan, 2007/Visvanathan, 1993, p.9). Therefore, local people were active participants in the projects of the mission societies.

Susan Visvanathan's book, “The Christians of Kerala: History, Belief and Ritual among the Yakoba,” is an ethnographic study of the practice of Christianity in a small community in Kerala and the local people's interpretation to the new religion. The two questions posed by the book that is used by the thesis are: “How do Syrian Christians perceive the past to which they are inextricably bound by their identity? (Visvanathan, 1999, p. xi)” and “What does it mean to be a Christian in terms of ritual and belief? (ibid)” These questions have been contextualised to the case of the Thadou-Kukis and their experiences with Christianity.

The book also discussed the property rights and domestic relationships of the Orthodox Jacobite Syrian Christians of Kerala. *Stridhanam* or female's wealth is the spaces in which the book discussed the concept of property rights. “*Stridhanam* is generally a very large sum of money (often running into lakhs of rupees) given by the father of the bride to the groom's father. The woman no longer has a share in her father's property (Visvanathan, 1999, p. 110).” As Susan Visvanathan had stated in the case of the Syrian Christian household, inheritance customs express the dominant place of the patriarch in the Thadou-Kuki society as well.

As the Thadou-Kukis or Kukis did not have written records before the advent of the British, the accounts of the colonial administrators and Missionaries became an important basis for understanding their history and identity. John Macrae's ‘Account of the Kookies, or Lunctas,’ published by the Asiatic Researches in 1801

was the pioneering literature for the Kukis.³ He wrote about the origin, institution of chieftainship system and marriage, modes of warfare and settlement of disputes, cultivation and domestication of animals, concept of god or the 'supreme being' (Macrae, 1979, p. 188). He noted that the Kukis were savage people with a most vindictive disposition: blood must always be shed for blood (ibid, p. 189). Rev. M. Barbe, a missionary in the interior of the district of Chittagong wrote about the migratory and independent nature of the Kukis in 1845. He called them 'children of nature' due to their mastery over nature and its resources. The Kukis would venture on hunting excursions when their agricultural labours are finished (Barbe, 1845, p. 386).

Another book that has been widely used in this thesis is by Lieut. R. Stewart's writing 'Notes on Northern Cachar,' in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1855. The uniqueness of his writing is that he was able to give a clear-cut distinction between the old Kukis and new Kukis ways of life. He draws the cultural parallelism and differences between the groups of people clubbed together under the banner of Old Kukis and New Kukis, and also their differences with the neighbouring Nagas. The book is a broad outline of the people residing in North Cachar hills in the 17th century (Stewart, 1855). G.A. Grierson's 'Linguistic Survey of India,' is based on a survey done in 1903-1928. He listed the Thado (Thadou) as belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family of language. The total speakers of Thado (Thadou) dialects during the period of his survey were: Manipur—20,000, Naga Hills—5,500, Cachar Plains—5,403 and Sylhet—534, totalling to 31, 437 (Grierson, 1990).⁴

Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear wrote 'The Lushei Kuki Clans' in 1912. The group classified as the New Kukis were synonymous with the Thado (Thadou) clan. He

3. John Macrae was a surgeon with the British East India Company at Chittagong. His writing was based on information given to him by a native of Rangamati district who was a captive of the Kukis for twenty years.

⁴ Grierson did not include North Cachar.

estimated the Thadou-Kuki population in the northern Cachar Hills and in the un-administered tracts between the Naga Hills and Manipur on the west and the upper Chindwin district of Burma on the east to be about 37,000 souls. The four main families are the Doungel, Sitlhou, Haokip and Kipgen. He gives accounts of the various institutions in the society like priest ship, marriage, warfare, religious rites and sacrifices and Thadou Folktales.

C.A. Soppitt, Assistant Commissioner, Burma, late sub-divisional officer of the North Cachar hills of Assam wrote 'A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes' which was first published in 1893. Besides the usual accounts of a colonial administrator which includes the physical characteristics, habits and religion, marriage and inheritance, government and village, crimes and oaths, superstitions and legends and an outline of grammar at the end, he revealed the true intention of an administrator's account of a tribe. He wrote:

The various Kuki laws treating on marriage, rights of succession, &C., will, the writer trusts, prove of value to officials in frontier districts, who are called upon to decide cases in which the tribal customary procedure can be the only guide to a correct decision (Soppit, 1976).

The most quoted and critically acclaimed book written on the Thadou-Kukis is the book by William Shaw, 'Notes on the Thadou-Kukis,' written in 1929.⁵ He acknowledged the scattered nature of the Thadous as inhabiting parts of the North Cachar Hills, the Naga Hills, the Manipur State and spreading east into the Chin Hills and Somra Tract. William Shaw gave a description of the origins and genealogies, historical traditions, customs, rites and beliefs, village, occupations, language and folk tales. He was assisted by a native, Jamkithang, a Thado (Thadou) of the Sitlhou clan, second clerk of Tamenglong sub-division, Manipur State, Kopsat, Dongpu and many chiefs of the various clans in codification of the customs and beliefs. Therefore, as J.H. Hutton who wrote the

⁵ This book was based on the author's seven years experience as a sub-divisional officer of the North West area of Manipur State amongst the Nagas and Thadou-Kukis.



introductory writings pointed out that it was bias towards the Sitlhou point of view.

5. Narrative, Territory and Identity

Different strands of narratives simultaneously existing in a society plays an important role in shaping the identity of a person or the community as a whole. Identities, "...are both imposed and self-made, produced through the interplay of names and social roles foisted on us by dominant narratives together with the particular choices families, communities, and individuals make over how to interpret, and resist, those impositions as well as how to grapple with their real historical experiences (Alcoff, 2003, p. 3)." Our interest is in the kind of narratives that determines the way land and identity diffused.

In some ways, the social order in the Thadou-Kuki society today has come to resemble an onion, each layer of which is a different age group. With the demise of the extended family, the segregation between generations has only gotten worse. The significance of the older populace in most tribal societies permeates beyond the boundaries of familial relations to a wider network of the society. They are important carriers or reservoirs of age-old traditions, reminders to our cultural heritage, and observers to a society in transition. These elders have been involuntarily, self-appointed recorders of the past since ancient times. It was only with the coming of the colonial missionaries, a century ago that the age-old and time-tested oral tradition found another medium of expression in the written word.

In a society like the Thadou-Kukis, which does not have a written literature before the advent of British Imperialist, oral tradition plays an important role in their understanding of their own history, social customs and social structure. Myth, stories, folktales, histories, gossips, informants' account and legends are passed down by word of mouth. Thus, for a society with no written records, myth becomes history to form a probable or acceptable presumption of origin

from which they can derive their identity and understand their origin and history.

Myth means a traditional story accepted as history, serves to explain the worldview of a people. According to Mircea Eliade in 'Myth and Reality,' 'myth' means a 'true story' and beyond that, a story that is a most precious possession because it is sacred, exemplary, significant (Eliade, 1964, p. 1). Today, that is, the word is employed in both the sense of "fiction" or "illusion" and in those families especially to ethnologists, sociologists and historians of religions, the sense of sacred tradition, primordial revelation, and exemplary model (ibid). Although the actors in myths are usually Gods and Supernatural beings, while those in tales are heroes or miraculous animals, all the actors share the common trait that they do not belong to the everyday world (ibid, pp. 10-11). The story narrated by the myth constitutes a "knowledge" which is esoteric, not only because it is secret and is handed on during the course of an initiation but also because the "knowledge" is accompanied by a magico-religious power. For knowing the origin of an object, an animal, a plant, and so on is equivalent to acquiring a magical power over them by which they can be controlled, multiplied, or reproduced at will (ibid, p. 15).

To understand the state of the society in the pre-colonial period, oral narratives are an important means of understanding the past. Jan Vansina (1985, p. xi) wrote, "Whether memory changes or not, culture is reproduced by remembrance put into words and deeds. The mind through memory carries culture from generation to generation". He continued, "Ancient things are today. Yes, oral traditions are documents of the present, because they are told in the present. Yet, they also embody a message from the past, so they are expressions of the past at the same time. They are the representation of the past in the present (ibid, p. xii)." Oral narratives can be treated as the collective voice of society, the voice of tradition (Chatterji, 1985, p. 269). "Originality of style and innovations in the means of expression are not considered important in the narrative in the same

manner as in modern fictional literature, where originality is a value in itself (ibid).”

“The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have conceptualised the process of the appropriation of land and its confiscation from those who have formerly worked it, with or without legal title, through the concepts of what they call ‘territorialization’⁶ and ‘deterritorialization.’ A third moment of ‘reterritorialisation’ describes the violent dynamics of the colonial or imperial propagation of economic, cultural, and social transformation of the indigenous culture, at the same time as characterizing the successful process of resistance to deterritorialization through the anti-colonial movements. Other forms of resistance have developed in the postcolonial state: combative negotiation with the state (Young, 2003, p. 52).”

Deterritorialisation is described by Deleuze and Guattari in myriads of ways: in *Anti-Oedipus* (1984), deterritorialisation is spoken of as ‘a coming undone whereas in ‘*A Thousand Plateaus* (1988),’ deterritorialisation constitutes the cutting edge of an assemblage (as cited in Parr, 2005, p. 66). “In their final collaboration—*what is philosophy?* (1994) —Deleuze and Guattari posit that “deterritorialisation” can be physical, mental or spiritual (ibid).” Deleuze and Guattari are concerned with overcoming the dualistic framework underpinning western philosophy (being/ non-being, original/ copy and so on). In this regard, the relationship “deterritorialisation” has to “reterritorialisation” must not be construed negatively or be considered as polar opposite of each other. The concept “deterritorialisation” is inherent in a territory as its transformative vector and is thereby tied to the very possibility of change immanent to a given territory (ibid).

⁶ Territorialisation refers to any establishment of a set of relations between people and an environment of objects, spaces, etc. In a narrower sense, it refers to the imposition of categories on others, which are enforced through organisations of social and physical space.

Deleuze and Guattari discuss and use deterritorialisation in several different theoretical contexts. Some of which are art, music, literature, philosophy and politics. For example, in the western visual arts, faces and landscapes are deterritorialised (ibid). They cite an example from the life of composer Olivier Messiaen who, from around 1955 on, used bird song in his compositions (Parr, 2005, ibid, pp. 67-68):

In this works, he did not just imitate the songs of birds; rather he brought birdsong into relation with the piano in a manner that transformed the territory of the musical instrument (piano) and the birdsong itself (ibid, p. 68). Here the distinctive tone, timbre and tempo of birdsongs were fundamentally changed the moment these elements connected with musical organisation. Similarly, Messiaen's compositional style also changed when it entered into a relation with birdsong, whereby these compositions could be described in terms of a becoming-bird (ibid).

The way in which the birds refrain is a territorial sign (ibid). Deleuze and Guattari address territoriality from the position of what is produced by the biological function of mating, hunting, eating and so forth, arguing that territoriality actually organises the functions' and not the other way round (ibid).

Apart from biology, Deleuze and Guattari extend a political use to them. "Leaning upon Karl Marx, they posit that labour-power is deterritorialised the moment it is freed from the means of production. That selfsame labour-power can be described as being reterritorialised when it is then connected to another means of production (ibid, p. 69)." Deleuza and Guattari wrote:

During the early phases of industrialisation when capitalism was really gaining momentum, a system of deterritorialising flows prevailed: markets were expanding, social activities were undergoing radical changes, and populations moved from rural to urban environments. In one sense rural labour power was deterritorialised (peasant and landowner) but in another sense it was reterritorialised (factory worker and industrial capitalist). Commenting on capitalism, they insist that deterritorialised flows of code are reterritorialised into

the axiomatic of capitalism and it is this connection between the two processes that constitutes the capitalist social machine (ibid).

Liisa Malkki in her article, 'National Geographic: The Rootings of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees,' while not denying the importance of place in the construction of identities, has posited that the two concept 'deterritorialization' and 'identity' are intimately linked (Malkki, 1992, p. 38). She re-examined the taken for granted assumption of people as deriving their identity only through their rootedness to a place and the need to rethink the question of roots in relation to identity and to the form of its territorialisation (ibid, p. 24). Malkki also brings out the relationship between the concept of culture and of nation. The concept of culture has many points of connection with that of the nation, and is likewise thought to be rooted in concrete localities. These botanical concepts of notions of rootedness in concrete localities reflect a metaphysical sedentarism in scholarly and other contexts (ibid, p. 34). The notions of nativeness and native place become more complex as people started identifying themselves in reference to deterritorialized 'homelands,' 'cultures,' and 'origins' (ibid, p. 24). There is also a tendency to inventing the notion of homes and homelands in the absence of territorial, national bases—not in situ, but through memories of, and claims on, places that they can or will no longer corporeally inhabit (ibid). "Motherland and fatherland, aside from their other historical connotations, suggest that each nation is a grand genealogical tree, rooted in the soil that nourishes it. By implication, it is impossible to be a part of more than one tree. Such a tree evokes both temporal continuity of essence and territorial rootedness (ibid, p. 28)."

Malkki discussed the case of the contemporary category of refugees:

The naturalisation of the links between people and place leads to a vision of displacement as pathological, and this, too, is conceived in botanical terms, as uprootedness. Uprootedness comes to signal a loss of moral and, later, emotional bearings. Since both cultural and national identities are conceived in territorialised terms, uprootedness also threatens to denature and spoil these (Malkki, 1992,p.34).

Identity is therefore, "...always mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories, et cetera (ibid, p. 37)".

Statement of the Problem

One dictionary definition for "land" is "the people of a country," as in "the land rose in rebellion." Similarly, soil is often "national soil." Here, the territory itself is made more human (Malkki, 1992, p. 26). Like the nation, culture has for long been conceived as something existing in "soil", and an indicator would be that the term culture is derived from the Latin for cultivation (ibid, p. 29).

Discourses and interdependence between humankind and ecology, palpable in day-to-day habits of most tribal societies usually becomes ingrained in their customary practices. Amongst the Thadou-Kukis of Manipur, the primeval religion before the advent of the Christianity, mythologies and legends reflects their worldview and close sentiments towards nature in general. There are social institutions that are set up to mediate or handle land as a part of the ecological structure like the Chieftainship system and *Thempu* system (priestly role). Therefore, the research asked the question—how does the ecological relation influence the institutions in the society and how does the social structure in turn influence the conceptualization of the ecological relations?

Land, in the form of agricultural activities and festivals is highly ritualised. While Durkheim emphasizes the integrative functions of ritual through his concepts of 'collective representation,' and 'collective conscience,' (1965) Mary Douglas defined ritual as a form of communication (1970) and Victor Turner (1981) used the concept of 'social drama' to define rituals. Contextualising these theories to our universe of study, the research asked the questions: what is the sociological significance and role of these agricultural rituals in the Thadou-Kuki society? What kind of power relation and meanings does the social discourse between humans and spirits portray? What does it reflect about the man-land relationships, and therefore, land and identity relationships in the society?

Colonialism was an experience that brought about lasting changes in the society. The colonial intervention, especially in the form of religious ideologies and practise affected the *Weltanschauung* of the Thadou-Kuki society. What was local people's interpretation of the reason behind their customs and venerations? How has the discourse and interaction with colonialism affected the relationship between land and man in the society? How far are the colonial agencies responsible for the alteration of social relationships and to identity? Is it change in the social institution affecting nature culture relationship or vice-versa?

There is a need to study the local peoples' conception of space and the forms of territorialisation wrought on these systems by the period of colonial subjugation. In studying societies and changes, Robert Redfield, analysed change at two organisational levels. In a civilization, there is a great tradition of the reflective few, and there is a little tradition of the largely unreflective many (Redfield, 1969, p. 70). The two traditions are interdependent (ibid, p. 71). It is based on the evolutionary view that civilization or the structure of tradition (which consists of both cultural and social structures) grows in two stages: first, through orthogenetic or indigenous evolution, and second, through heterogeneity encounters or contacts with other cultures or civilisations (Chopra, 2009, p. 841-842). What is the nature of social change brought about by colonialism in the society under study? What are the form ideological and cultural reconstitutions it entails?

Colonial bureaucrats, Christianity, as put forward by the missionaries, and the tribal society in general had distinct and clearly defined identities and cultural contours. The interaction is comparable to the meeting of the 'little tradition' and 'great tradition' as given by Redfield. Hence, their encounter, interaction and resultant shapes taken by them formed both a promising and interesting field of study. What is the contribution of the colonial administrators and the missionary in restructuring the power structure and the re-ordering of space and society amongst the Hill tribes of Manipur, particularly the Thadou-Kukis?

The Concept of land and land rights for the Hill Tribes of Manipur started as a collective enterprises. The British were the first to ask the wrong question of, "who owns this land?", when they came to India, based on their understanding of European and Roman Land Laws. The British colonial administration formed land related laws created as a merger between the newly introduced British law and the traditional system. This trend of governance based on an alien mode of administration has continued in the postcolonial era in the Indian Government policies towards the hill tribes. Various Acts have been enacted such as the Manipur Hill People Administration Regulation Act, 1947, The Manipur Village Authorities in Hill Areas Act, 1956, The Manipur Hill Areas Acquisition of Chief's Rights Act, 1967, The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971, and The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reform Act, 1960 respectively. The research asked the question--What is the impact of the various acts on the villagers' relationship to land?

There is complexities in land relations as well as in the social life of the people due to the imposition of an administration, which do not really understand the existential reality of the ruled. Its irrelevance and insensitivity makes it undesirable to the local people. However, the fact that they are laws issued by a mightier authority makes it a dominant power. Therefore, the realities in most villages today are the side-by-side existence of traditional laws and government laws. Like most of the postcolonial societies, combative negotiation with the state as a form of resistance or the Saidian concept of 'voyage-in' is a common recurrences. The research asked the crucial questions--what is the concept of land rights according to the state? How has the two varied concept collide over the years? What impact do they have on the Thadou-Kukis concept of land rights?

For Durkheim and Mauss, the social organisation influences the functioning of the logical operations or the classification of things (Durkheim et al., 1975). Similarly, in the Thadou-Kuki society, the fight for rights to land sometime starts

within the clan, lineage or family where some sections are deprived of their rightful inheritance. Inequality in gender relations within the family is extended at the socio-political level. The feminist theorists like Ann Oakley (1974 & 1981) and Sherry Ortner (1974) supported the perspective that gender roles are product of culture rather than biology and that individuals are socialised into their respective male and female roles. The woman land rights in the Thadou-Kuki society is determined by the customary norms of the society. The question of gender relations within the family and women's role and position in the society and the issue of inheritance influence the matrix of the relationship between land and woman.

The feminist public-private debate stated that women sub-ordination and oppression would be solved if women are encouraged into the public sphere viz., in the public decision making fora. Bina Agarwal (1998, p. xv) positing the case of South Asia emphasised on the importance of individual ownership in promoting the wellbeing and empowerment of women. So, the research questions evolved around what hindered the women access to land? What are the institutions that directly or indirectly support the patriarchal hegemony over land and what is the affect of religion in the relationship between land and women in the society?

Another dimension of land and culture relationship that is problematic is the agrarian societies. The economy of the Thadou-Kukis was characterised by closely related bonds of kinship operative through families, clans and kindred governed production and distribution. Robert Redfield (1969, pp. 270-28) classifies between peasants and farmers, viz, between those who makes a living out of it and those who look at land as capital for business ventures. Another classical agrarian theoretician Alexander Chayanov's (Thorner et. al, 1987, p.xiii) gave a definition of pure family farm as one that employs no hired wage labour but is solely dependent on the work of the members of family. How relevant is this in the context of the Thadou-Kuki society? What is the degree of penetration of capitalist relations into agriculture? For Kautsky (Banaji, 1976, p.11), the

indicators of the capitalist character of modern agriculture were individual ownership of land, and the commodity character of its products. In positioning the tribal land tenure system within the wider context of the country, how different is it as compared to the agrarian societies under the caste system.

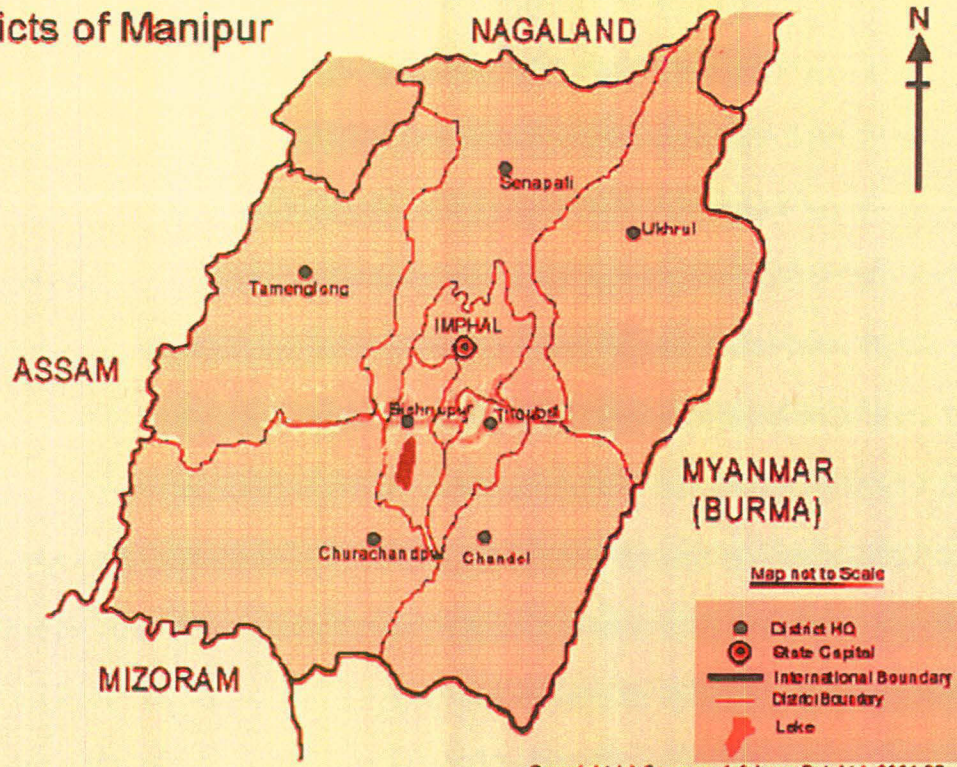
The study of land tenure inevitably resolves itself into a number of questions as to how land is used by the community and its members. It can reveal to us the customary or legal system of titles—that is of rights, privileges and responsibilities attached to the soil. What are the rights, privileges and responsibilities in relation to land in the Thadou-Kuki society? How dependent are they on land for livelihood and how does this dependence on land change over the years? Is the agrarian village landholding structure able to sustain livelihood of the people? For Karl Marx (Morrison, 1995, pp. 66-67), the products produced by labour in tribal society did not assume the form of commodities because their labour was produced by cooperation rather than isolated acts of labour. The agriculture system by tradition is a collective enterprise characterised by self-sufficiency and communal and family labour. How is the agrarian labour system organised in the society? What is the nature of agrarian transition in the hills?

The Locale: Encounter and Experiences

The Universe of Study is the Thadou-Kuki dominated areas of Manipur where the influence of British Colonialism was more prominent. The three areas selected for fieldwork are Tujang Vaichong⁷, Motbung and Kangpokpi. The three areas fall within the Sadar Hills Sub-division of the Senapati District of Manipur. Senapati District is one of the nine districts of Manipur and lies in the North West of the state. The hill areas of Manipur are not covered under the Sixth Schedule of the constitution, but under a state legislation, the Manipur Hill

⁷ The Government records used the word, 'Tujang Vaichong' whereas the local inhabitants call themselves, 'Tujang Waichong.'

Districts of Manipur



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Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/manipur/manipur.htm>

State- MANIPUR
District- Senapati



Source: Census of India, District Census Handbook, Record Structure: Village Directory,
2001

State- MANIPUR
District- Senapati



Source: Census of India, District Census Handbook, Record Structure: Village Directory, 2001.

Areas District Councils Act, 1971.⁸ This Act established six autonomous district councils in Manipur, covering five districts. Senapati district has two autonomous district council⁹—Senapati ADC and Sadar Hills ADC. The three villages had been the mission stations in the colonial missionaries' days. Since the three villages that constitute my field are under three different types of authority system, the land system also slightly differs from one region to another, however the basic structure is the same for all Kuki dominated areas.

The first two villages, is a typical traditional Thadou-Kuki villages which is under chieftainship. The members of the village council assist the chief. Kangpokpi is not under chieftainship system but exist under the autonomy of a town committee called the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee. This difference in the choice of leadership is an important marker of the rural urban differences. Choices of leadership in rural areas tends to be more on the basis of the known personal qualities of the individual than in urban areas, mainly because of far greater face-to-face contacts and more intimate face-to-face contacts and more intimate knowledge of individuals than is possible in urban areas (Chitambar, 1973, pp. 134-135). However, it is irrelevant to conceive societal types in pure dichotomy. With increasing interactions between all types of societies through modern means of transportation and communication, the frontiers of different cultures are breaking down (Oomen, 1984, p. 19). This is relevant to the society under study.

⁸ Planning for the Sixth Schedule Areas, 2007 (September), Report of the Expert Committee, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, New Delhi

⁹ An autonomous area is an area of a country that has a degree of autonomy, or freedom from an external authority. Typically it is either geographically distinct from the rest of the country or populated by a national minority (Autonomous Area, Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomous_area, accessed date: 2nd July, 2011)

Demographic Profile of the Field

Name of the village	Location of the area of study	Census of 2001 (No. of Households) ¹⁰	Census of 2001 (No. of Population)		Local Records (No. of Households) 2008	Local Records (No. of Population) 2008	
			Male	Female		Male	Female
<i>Tujang Vaichong</i>	<i>Sadar Hills West Sub-Div of Senapati Dist.</i>	156	810		194 ¹¹	1015	
			<i>Male-420</i>			<i>Male-520</i>	
			<i>Female-390</i>			<i>Female-495</i>	
<i>Motbung</i>	<i>Saitu-Gamphazol Sub-Div of Senapati Dist.</i>	478	3169		528 ¹²	3591	
			<i>Male-1597</i>			<i>Male-1772</i>	
			<i>Female-1572</i>			<i>Female-1819</i>	
<i>Kangpok pi</i>	<i>Sadar-Hills West Sub-Div of Senapati Dist.</i>	774	4584		1662 ¹³	9092	
			<i>Male-2328</i>			<i>Male-4492</i>	
			<i>Female-2256</i>			<i>Female-4600</i>	

In defining the distribution of socio-spatial categories, Evans-Pritchard uses the term, "Structural Distance" that means the distance between groups of person in a social system, expressed in terms of values (Evans-Pritchard, 1969, pp. 120). Structural distance is the distance between groups of persons in social structure and is influenced in its political dimension by its ecological conditions (ibid, p. 109). The character of scattered habitation of the Thadou-Kuki tribe resembles

¹⁰ Census of India, 2001, District Census Handbook, Record Structure: Village Directory

¹¹ Chief's of Tujang Vaichong Record, 2008

¹² Motbung Village Hill House Counting, Population Census 2008

¹³ The Ward wise hill house counting for the year 2008 by SDC Kangpokpi, Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration, Kangpokpi

the Nuer tribe of the Nilotic people who lived in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and among whom Evans-Pritchard conducted his study. A Nuer village, he wrote may be equidistant from two other villages, but if one of these belongs to a different tribe and the other to the same tribe it may be said to be structurally more distant from the first than from the second. A Nuer tribe, which is separated by forty miles from another Nuer tribe, is structurally nearer to it than to a neighbouring Dinka tribe from which it is separated by only twenty miles (ibid, p. 120).

Tujang Vaichong is the village in which the Colonial Missionaries built the first Kuki Church in 1916. The Kuki Baptist Convention continued to be the only Church in the village until today. Tour diaries of the political agent in Manipur for 1938-39 record the complaint of the people of this village to the colonial government on the *begar* or *pothang* system that they are made to carry more than their fair share to Kangpokpi. This document records the distance between Imphal and Tujang Vaichong to be 42 miles on July 21st 1938.¹⁴ Tujang Vaichong is a village with a household population of 156 as per the government census of 2001. The number of household as per the chief's record in 2008 is 194 out of which 78 are non-Kuki. It is around 40 kms away from Kangpokpi, and Kangpokpi is around 50 km north of Imphal. There is a large-scale migration to Kangpokpi (the third field area), which have evolved into a full-fledged town. The push factor could be the lack of amenities, which are crucial for development like education system, electricity or power, proper transportation and communication system. A household survey was done in 65 houses. It still follows many of the traditional customary laws and practices. The chief still has a legitimate rule over the people. The chief is a resourceful woman in her eighties, acting on behalf of her son who is a government employee. Women have never been elected as members of the village authority to assist the chief. The chief still has a legitimate rule over the people.

¹⁴ Tour Dairies of Political Agent in Manipur for 1938-9, G.P. Stewart, Esqr., I.C.S, Political Agent for the month of April, 1938

Tujang Vaichong under Imphal-Tamenglong Road¹⁵ is under Kangpokpi Police Station. Tujang Vaichong is around 40 kms away from Kangpokpi, and Kangpokpi is around 50 km north of Imphal. It is in the borderline between Senapati and Tamenglong district. There are many villages between Kangpokpi and Tujang Vaichong village. The roads are extremely bad and transportation is very unreliable and uncomfortable. There is no electricity supply in the village and people use solar lamps to light up their houses at night. There was one movie/video hall in the whole village. It runs with the help of a generator, which is recharged in the nearest town. The village was partitioned into two main zones – *Bazaar Veng* is on the National highway. It has all the government offices and main shops, schools, temple etc. The Nepalis, meaning the people who originated from Nepal, also reside in this area mostly. This zone lies in the periphery of the village. It lies in the plain area. The second section comprises of four neighbourhoods. They are – *Toulpi veng*, *Boljang veng*, *Khoto veng (Lhanglang veng)* and *Vengthah/Lhanghoi veng*. It is about 20 minutes walk up the steep hill to reach this place. The chief's residence is located here.

Motbung is a semi-town where both modernization and traditional practices existed side by side. The pioneer church is still functioning with a different name. The village chief still exists in name but it is the village council who has the authority. Motbung village is located on the National Highway 39 in Manipur, which is about 26 kms from Imphal, the capital. Chieftainship system is still functional and the present chief is a postgraduate from the North Eastern Hill University. Motbung was the result of the union of many small villages who had come together at the initiation of the first chief Pu Lunneh in the 1930's.¹⁶

¹⁵ Imphal-Tamenglong Road is popularly known as 'IT road' by the local inhabitants of Kangpokpi and Tujang Vaichong village. IT road is a road in Kangpokpi town in Senapati district that leads to Tamenglong district. Tujang Vaichong is a village in the border of the two districts.

¹⁶ A descendant of the old chief of one of the merged village narrates his displeasure over the merger that had happened in his father's time. He narrates how his ancestor had been fooled into giving up their land rights. This was the same with the Phoipi chief.

The village council consists of 14 members, who are loosely elected by the community from the village itself. Women are not presented on this traditional council. As per 2001 census, the village had about 478 household, but as per the chief census of 2008, the household population was 609. The village was divided into ten small neighbourhoods. In order to get a proper representation of the population, 20 houses were selected out of each lane. The village had ten lanes. They were –

1. Aithuh Veng (neighbourhood)
2. Phoipi Veng (neighbourhood)
3. Forest Veng (neighbourhood)
4. Lhungjang Veng (neighbourhood)
5. Salem Veng (neighbourhood)
6. Nazereth Veng (neighbourhood)
7. Inpi Veng (neighbourhood)
8. Sharon Veng (neighbourhood)
9. Bethlehem Veng (neighbourhood)
10. Bethel Veng (neighbourhood)

Motbung had only about four different churches, which was quite surprising for a moderate size village. They were Motbung Baptist Church, Biblical Baptist Church, Immanuel Baptist Church, Gospel light Baptist Church, Judaism with MBC having the greater membership. Perhaps the fact that it is the oldest church and the chief is a member to it contributed to its growth. The Motbung Baptist Church was established on 1st January 1944 under the Chief ship of Mr. Lunneh.

All the church other than Judaism follows the Baptist doctrine so it is surprising as to why it is divided. The church plays an important role in the society too¹⁷.

Kangpokpi represents an altogether different entity. It is not under chieftainship system but under the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee. It is under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration. The District Council conducted the general election. There are fifteen members in the committee and the term is for three years. There has never been a women member in the committee ever since its inception. However, the president and the secretary of the Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation (the prominent and only women organisation in Kangpokpi in the secular sphere) are invited to attend the meetings of the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee over community issues. Chieftainship system has never existed in any form in Kangpokpi. The authority system that exists before was called 'Bazar Board.' The KUTC is a continuation of this bazar board. The number of house as per the 2008 census is 1662. The town is divided into fifteen wards. The appropriate term is hill-urban, which is purely under district council. The apex governing body is the district council. The local governance is based on the customary laws and traditions with certain amendments. A household survey was conducted of 40 houses of each of the 15 wards/ locality. The town has about 17 churches, 18 NGOs, 34 government offices, 2 Hindu temple, 14 schools and 3 colleges etc. The Kangpokpi Christian Church is the church with the largest population in the area.

Senapati District, one of the nine districts of Manipur is composed of six Sub-Divisions: Sadar Hills West Sub-division, Saitu Gamphazol Sub-division, Sadar Hills East-division, Mao Maram, Paomata and Purul Sub-divisions respectively. As per the 2001 Census, 78.5 % of the population in Senapati District belongs to the Scheduled Tribe group of people and constituted 16.6 % of the total

¹⁷ The chief had a mastermind plan to bring all the church under one umbrella for further unification of its people. A divided church he thought would affect the unity of the people.

Scheduled Tribe population in Manipur.¹⁸ Thus, the three areas that has been selected as field area, namely Tujang Vaichong village, Motbung Village and Kangpokpi Urban Town falls within two different sub-division of Senapati district. A map of the location of the sub-divisions and the Senapati District itself is attached at the end of the thesis.

The three areas are still dominantly an agricultural community and land still plays an important deciding factor in the cultural life of the people. They fall within the Sadar Hills division, where the local people have been demanding a full-fledged district for all Kukis of Manipur. Bandhs and strikes were frequent due to the government inability to fulfil their demand. During my fieldwork days in between August-December 2008, the Motbung village had organised an inter-village football tournament called the '*Mangboi Trophy*.' Many villages and football team from the neighbouring villages had come to participate to win the coveted title. Moreover, the UPA government scheme for rural village or the National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes was being carried out. Each household had one member to work and they were promised 80 rupees per day for 100 days. The roads to the lanes were made bigger to enable even big vehicles to go inside. There were a lot of commotion and disputes regarding the carving out of bigger roads as this would go against the interest of the landowners whose land was taken. The village authorities were made to check on the workers and give direction to the work. This scheme is relevant to the tribal society as they are used to working in groups as a continuation of their '*lom*'¹⁹ system or organisational labour corps.

The thesis records another land-based agitation in the hills of Manipur. On 29th July, 2010, a total bandh for 12 hours was called in the hills and tribal areas of

¹⁸ Census of India, 2001, Manipur (Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes), Office of the Registrar General, India, http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_manipur.pdf, accessed date 12th may, 2011

¹⁹ *Lom* is the organisational set-up for the purpose of agricultural activity. It is a form of social arrangement of labour. The topic is discussed more elaborately in chapter 6 of the thesis.

Churachandpur, Chandel, Tamenglong and Sadar Hills in Senapati Districts of Manipur by the COPTAM (Committee on Protection of Tribal Areas) and supported by CDSU (Churachandpur District Student Union) and TPFM (Tribal's People Forum Manipur). Overlapping Census Operation, 2011, Redrawing of district boundaries, improper maintenance of tribal land records and dual taxation of the hill-tribes were the main reason for discontentment. Of the five hill districts of Manipur, namely – Senapati (Senapati and Sadar Hills), Churachandpur, Ukhrul, Tamenglong and Chandel, according to the map redrawn by the Manipur Remote Sensing Application Centre (MARSAC), many tribal villages in close proximity are merged with the valley districts. For instance out of 14 villages within the revenue jurisdiction of Imphal west under Lamshang sub-division, 10 were also found included in the Sadar Hills (Kangpokpi) as per Hill house Tax Payment records of the Hill Department. The Committee of Protection of Tribal Areas Manipur (COPTAM) is also demanding rectification of overlapping district boundaries in the census operation. The body demands de-linking of revenue collection from the Census operation and district boundary demarcation, and an immediate conduct of Census in the overlapping villages to be carried out by concerned hill districts as was done till 2001 Census. They are also demanding maintaining of land records in the respective hill districts and collection of land revenues thereof by the concerned hill districts and initiation of constitutional protection of Manipur tribal areas as was done in all tribal areas of North-East India.²⁰ Subsequently, bandhs and strikes were frequent as a part of land rights assertion of the hill tribes.

Methods and Techniques of Research

The research proposes to use the ethnographic method, which would include observation and both structured and unstructured interviews. It will also be

²⁰ Coptam, August 27, 2010, <http://coptam.wordpress.com/2010/08/27/state-cabinet-to-discuss-census-overlapping/> (accessed date: 12th May, 2011)

inductive and exploratory²¹ in nature. It made use of both primary and secondary sources. The primary source includes the official writings like government reports, Census, military or topographical reports, gazetteers, administrative reports, and archival materials, ethnographic and academic monographs written by colonial administrators. Missionary literature in the form of field reports, socio-cultural life of the tribes in their fields, Christian literature, autobiographies and the proceedings and discussions in various conventions held by the mission society, etc. Secondary texts includes the written texts of sociologists, historians, anthropologists, local writers' accounts, scholarly interpretation and analysis of colonial ethnographies in the form of research works and published books as secondary materials and political scientists who have done various empirical and theoretical studies in the region. T.K. Oommen lists down two characteristics of academic anthropology: (1) anthropology flowered during the colonial period and (2) the essence of the anthropological perspective is to study the Other, because it enables a better understanding of one's own society (Oommen, 2010, p. 304). The thesis used the comparative method to draw parallels with the writings on other tribal societies like the Indian central tribal belts and African tribal societies.

Ethno history tries to understand culture on its own terms and according to its own cultural code. It differs from other historically related methodologies in that it embraces emic perspectives as tools of analysis. To understand reality according to the subject of study, fieldwork is conducted in three selected areas of Manipur chosen after a one-month pilot survey. Prior to the proper execution of field studies, observation mostly non-participation was done in the selected area. It begins as a systematic observation and a daily field note was maintained

²¹ In the explanation of Russell K. Schutt,s, 'Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research', exploratory research seeks to find out how people get along in the setting under question, what meanings they give to their actions, and what issues concerns them. The methodology can also be referred to as 'grounded theory' approach to 'qualitative research' or 'interpretative research' and is an attempt to 'unearth' a theory from the data itself rather than from a pre-disposed hypothesis.

in which the significant events of each day were recorded along with informants' interpretations. Initial observations would focus on general, open-ended data gathering derived from learning the most basic cultural rules, testing out whether my research objectives were meaningful and practical in the local situation as also to gain rapport with the key-informants. Observation of ritual performance, activities in agricultural fields, hierarchical categories in the village, the meeting of the village council, land distribution, land use, land settlement, land tenure, church and women's role and contribution in the village. As for the land rituals, except for the *Kut* festival, there being no ritual performed in it, I had to be content with the narration of the aged population.

In the early experiences in the field, one is constantly grappling with the intangible with the reality all around. After the initial orientation or entry period, which took one month then a more systematic program of formal interviews, was done. Aside from written observation and records, collection of ethnographic representations in other forms is made, such as collected artefacts, photographs, tape recordings of the life histories or personal narratives. My experience as a fieldworker is the study of people who belongs to the same tribe and speaks a similar language as I do but is in a setting far removed from my own. So, their classification of 'social reality' which provide the 'inside view' was something that I learned gradually as the experience and elements which I had taken for granted slowly takes unexpected turns.²²

For Clifford Geertz culture is public because meaning is (Geertz, 1973, p. 12). It is actually a product or a construct of social situation and transmitted through communication. Culture is not power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context,

²² If one studies one's own society, one starts with some understanding of the system under observation. Insofar as one knows the values and ideologies underlying actions in a society, observation need only be undertaken to locate the gap between the ideal and the actual. (Oomen, 1984, p. 63)

something within which they can be intelligibly—that is thickly—described (ibid, p. 14). Understanding a people's culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity. (ibid) I support Malinowski's third commandment of fieldwork, which posits the need to find out the typical ways of thinking and feeling, corresponding to the institutions and culture of a given community (Malinowski, 1972, p. 23). He opines that there is a series of phenomena of great importance, which cannot possibly be recorded by questioning, or computing documents but have to be observed in their full actuality. He called them the "imponderabilia of actual life (ibid, p. 18)." 'Finding our feet' is a term used in ethnographic research on personal experience in trying to formulate the basis in which one imagines (Geertz, 1973, p. 13). To find one's feet, one does not start (or ought not) intellectually empty-handed. Theoretical ideas are not created wholly anew in each study; they are adopted from other related studies and refined in the process applied to new interpretative problems (Geertz, 1973, p. 27). Here I agree with Max Weber the difficulty in drawing a sharp empirical line between meaningful action and merely reactive behaviour to which no subjective meaning is attached (Weber, 1978, p. 4). Therefore, the question was aimed at extracting information regarding what they feel and think qua members of a given community. Here, there is a problem of differentiating the views of the respondents whether it represents the ideal and the actual.

There were certain local specific term, categories and ways of life that one needs to understand in order to comprehend an area. All the three areas of my field are still a society governed by complex ties of kinship and clanship. For instance, the most common references to time frame is the world war II called 'Japan War' or 'Japan Gal.' Kailal Lhouvum²³ says that wet rice cultivation must have been started after the war. Before that, the settlement was confined to the hill slopes. Most of the customary objects like the metals used in ornaments or certain auspicious materials used in the rituals like 'dahkang' originated besides a river in

²³ Kailal Lhouvum, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, Interviewed on 12th October, 2008

Burma. One thing that clearly marked out village life from those of town or city is the obligation they feel towards guests. Even in areas that were under chieftainship system, elements that were once the hallmark of the institution were slowly undergoing changes. One indicator is traditional practice of giving 'changseo' or a basketful of paddy to the chief at the time of harvesting. The Chief of Tujang Vaichong, an old woman of about 80 years narrates how the villagers in her village no longer pay this customary tribute. However, in the second village Motbung, the villagers still pay the tribute, sometimes in monetary form.

To understand the demography and details of each area, household survey is taken in one-third of the population of each area. The idea behind the utilisation of the household survey method is to understand in quantitative terms such as the magnitude and mobility of villages, individual mobility, social composition of villages, and numerical analysis of village and Census data. This survey also helps to establish rapport with one's respondent to inquire about every realities as well as sensitive issues.²⁴ Scheduled questionnaires on farm related questions were given to the respondents in the household surveys who were directly involved in farming.

Details of Household Survey Conducted

<i>Name of Village</i>	<i>Household Population</i>	<i>No. of respondent for Household survey</i>
Tujang Vaichong	194	65
Motbung	609	200
Kangpokpi	1662	560

²⁴ The sociologists T.K. Oomen suggested a technique to counter the problem of observer or interviewer bias or informant bias. In order to counter this problem we need to select a representative sample of informants or respondents from different strata or segments of society and try to understand their viewpoints. (Oomen, 1984, p. 66)

The anthropologists Victor Turner concept of, “exegesis”, would be a relevant tool in our mode of analysis of the field. The exegetical meaning is obtained from questioning indigenous informants about observed ritual behaviour, so that a symbol's manifest sense (of which the ritual subjects are fully aware) can be revealed. The informants may be ritual specialists or laymen. Exegesis can also be derived through the analysis of myths, through the fragmentary interpretations of separate rituals or ritual stages, and through written or verbally uttered doctrines and dogmas. In the context of our selected field of study, viz the Thadou society, not everyone remembers the old rituals and cultural practices. So, the older populace would make better informants than others because they had firsthand experience of encountering the pioneer colonial rulers and have been participant observant themselves on many changes that have affected the society. The narrative of the older populace have been utilised as the material source for the chapter on social ecology.²⁵ Accordingly, un-structured interview was done on them.

Structured Interview carried out with the women leaders, village chief, village authority leaders and town committee members. There was a different set of scheduled question for the areas governed by chieftainship system (Motbung and Tujang Vaichong) and the one by Urban Town Committee (Kangpokpi). The interviews and responses were mainly in the Thadou dialect besides Manipuri. In the three field areas, there were two types of women leadership in the village. One is the religious groupings within the church the “Women Society” and the other is the more secular yet welfare related association called the “Women Union.” A study was done on the women organisations functioning in Tujang Vaichong Village, Motbung Village and Kangpokpi hill urban. In areas that had

²⁵ Narratives from the older populace reflects historical affinities between scattered societies – the Chang-nungah ritual, the Daiphu ritual, Lom system, the ritual for building a new village – all these practices transcends across man-made boundaries to all the Kuki inhabited places of Burma, Manipur, Nagaland and Assam.

more than one church²⁶ the most populated church's women wing along with the most effective women organisation at the societal level was studied. The aim is to understand the role of women in setting up parallel institutional structures to village councils. They were asked question on the issues of inheritance of land as immovable property, role of women in the church and in the society and the scope of women in the political domain of the village structure.

The scene outside the chief's house in Tujang Vaichong was betraying. It seems to picture the village as an egalitarian society. There was a big open space where the villagers were conducting a sports-meet for the youth. The girls were playing football. However, in the history of the election of the village council that assists the chief, there has never been a woman candidate. Moreover, there were certain gender conventions that come in the way of procuring data during interviews. Some of the women, when interviewed allowed the man, their husband, father or elder brother to speak on their behalf. However, when approached when they were left on their own, were open to discussion on the most sensitive gender issues. The proceedings of customary court of the three areas in land related matter was recorded. Outside my field area, interview was done with the leaders of the land-based movement, the Sadar Hills Autonomous District Demand Committee and the intellectuals who specialised in land issues of the Kuki society in particular and Manipur in general.

Outline of the Study

The study comprises of five main chapters besides an introductory and a conclusion chapter. The introduction presents the theoretical and methodological arguments of the study and a descriptive outline of the people and locale in which the study has been conducted. The first chapter is a continuation of the introduction, which is a description of the social profile and land system of the Thadou-Kukis.

²⁶ Kangpokpi has 17 churches; Motbung has 4 main churches whereas Vaichong has only one.

Chapter two examines the relationship between land and identity by studying the social ecology of the Thadou-Kukis of Manipur. It reflects the important place of land in the worldview and cosmology of the society. Their attitude and reverence for land is reflected in the sacred space and institution it occupies in the society and the various rituals attributed to it. It brings out how the ecological relations influence the institutions in the society and how the social structure in turn influence the conceptualization of the ecological relations. The change brought about by the colonial missionary widened the gap between land and man as they interpret the relationship through their own lens, made stipulations accordingly and gradually reduce land to an alien entity.

Chapter three studies the varied ramifications of colonialism in the Hills of Manipur with particular reference to the Thadou-Kuki society. It studies both the administrators and missionaries as colonial agencies and tries to trace the varied instruments of colonialism that changed the traditional land structure and impede the principality that governs the Thadou-Kuki society. The chapter analysed the imprint of colonialism and policies of the British towards the hill tribes; the interplay between indigenous leadership and colonial power, sociological implications of the various land-based conflicts and the contribution of colonial encounter in re-ordering of space and society.

Chapter four examines the various land rights discourses in the hills of Manipur. The various discourses are categories under two groups—legitimising and oppositional rights discourses against the colonial and Indian State's economic and social policies. It will study the various Acts that is enacted and the impact of the various acts on the people's relationship to land. It would attempt to highlight the complexities in land relations as well as in the social life of the people due to the dual existence of both customary laws and the government laws besides the imposition of an administration that does not understand the tribal ethos. Lastly, it will bring out the conflict in land rights and land laws and stress on the need for the participation of the local people for whom the laws were made and the formulation of appropriate laws to suit them.

Chapter five tries to understand the issues of women's land rights in the Thadou-Kuki society; what hindered their access to land, what are the institutions that directly or indirectly support the patriarchal hegemony over land and what is the role of religion in the relationship between land and woman in the society? The debate centres on ancestral land in which there is still restriction for women's ownership by the customary laws. The study discussed the possibilities of ownership of land by women, roles of women in agricultural production, roles played by women's organisation in the society and church, the level of influence the women's organisation has on the overall administration and inheritance issues in contemporary Thadou-Kuki society.

Chapter six is about the agrarian transition in the hills from a stage in which agricultural technology was dominated by customs and traditions. It studies land as a livelihood system and as a productive resources for the people and how this has changed over the years, due to the degree of capitalism that has seeped in, due to the influence of globalisation and development projects of the Indian Nation-state. It will highlight how the political- legal-economic measures have affected the micro-level social institutions, the units of the social system primarily the nature of agrarian transition in the hills.

CHAPTER 1

Mapping of the Region, People and Culture

1. 1 Introduction

The Chapter describes the social profile and the land system of the society under study in order to make it easier for analysis in the subsequent chapters. The history of origin, migration, the various social institutions and customary norms governing social relationships in the society are illustrated. In order to understand the land question and the concept of land rights in the society, it is crucial that one is acquainted with the organization that governs land relations in both traditional and modern day Thadou-Kuki society. The significance of land in the society is proved by the fact that social hierarchies are directly or indirectly arranged, based on their relation to land.

1. 2 Manipur: Geographical Location and Population Distribution

Manipur lies between the latitudes 23. 47 and 25. 41 and longitudes 93.6 and 94.48 (Dun, 1992, p. 1). The state boundaries are Nagaland by the North, North-Cachar hills and Cachar Districts of Assam by the west, Mizoram by the South and the Kabow valley and the Chin hills of Burma by the East (and Southeast respectively) (Gangte, 1993, p. 28). Manipur has two distinct physiographic divisions of the hills and the plains. It is nine-tenths hills and one-tenth plains (Das, in Sanajaoba (ed.), 1995, p. 48). The hill area covers nine-tenth of the total area of the state, which indicates that the tribal areas are scarcely populated with a density of 44 people per sq. km. The density in the valley is 631 people per sq. km (Kipgen, in Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 329). The plain area mainly consists of the valley region right in the heart and centre of the state and this valley is surrounded by the hills where the tribes of the state resided since pre-history (Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 15).¹ Dr. Grierson also scientifically established the

¹ Legends and folklore of the tribes as well as Meiteis of the plains trace their common origins to the hill settlements in the mountains, until the three brothers separated and branched out as the Kukis, the Nagas and the plains living Meities.

linguistic affinity between the Meiteis and the hill people. All people of both valley and hill areas are predominantly Mongoloid who speak Tibeto-Burman languages.²

The state of Manipur has a total area of 22, 327 sq. km and the valley covers an area of 2238 sq. km. According to the census of 2001, the total population was 2, 166, 788 (excluding the population of the sub-divisions of Mao-Maram, Paomata and Purul of Senapati district).³ The population of the hill districts is 8, 82, 130 and the scheduled tribal population is 7,41,142 out of which the ST population of the valley districts was 56, 247 and the urban dwellers were 28, 058 only (Kamei, in Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 103). Therefore, the ST population in Manipur is predominantly rural with 95.3 per cent rural and 4.7 per cent urban population.⁴ They constitute 34.2 percent of the total population of Manipur.⁵ The total number of villages in the state is 2391 according to the census of 2001 out of which 1901 are villages in the hill areas and 490 are villages of the valley. The tribal villages increased from 1402 (1971) to 1547 (1981), 1727 (1991) and 1901 (2001). The 33 Scheduled Tribes mostly inhabit these hill villages (Kamei, in Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 103).

Below is a diagram to show the district wise composition of the Scheduled Tribe population as per the 2001 census.

² Grierson, G.A., Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. III, Part III, p. 6, as documented in Manipur Fact File, 2001, AMCTA

³ Census of India, 2001, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/A-Series/A-Series_links/t_00_003.aspx (accessed date 14th may, 2011)

⁴ Census of India, 2001, Manipur (Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes), Office of the Registrar General, India, http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_manipur.pdf, (accessed date 12th may, 2011)

⁵ *ibid*

District wise Scheduled Tribes Population⁶

Sl. no. State/ District	Percentage of STs to total Population of the State/ District	District wise percentage of total ST population
1. MANIPUR*	34.2	100
2. Ukhrul	95.5	18.1
3. Tamenglong	95.4	14.3
4. Churachandpur	93.2	28.7
5. Chandel	91.9	14.7
6. Senapati*	78.5	16.6
7. Imphal East	6.3	3.3
8. Imphal West	4.8	2.8
9. Bishnupur	2.9	0.8
10. Thoubal	1.2	0.6

* Excluding three subdivisions (Paomata, Mao-Maram, & Purul) of Senapati district

The districts of Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Churachandpur, and Chandel are predominantly tribal districts having more than 90 per cent of the district's population as scheduled tribe. Senapati district, which constituted the field area for my study, has recorded 78.5 per cent of its population as belonging to the scheduled tribe population.

Anthropologically, a tribe is a social group, the members of which live in a common territory, have a common dialect, uniform social organisation and possess cultural homogeneity having a common ancestor, political organisation and religious pattern. Again, the government recognises a number of tribal groups and they are the Scheduled tribes. However, since all the tribal and analogous social formations are not considered as Scheduled tribe, and when

⁶ Op cit

tribal population is considered, it always refers to scheduled tribal population recognised by the government, the number of actual tribal population must be more than what is mentioned as Scheduled Tribe population (Chaudhuri (ed.), 1992, p. vii).

Below is given the tribe wise population of Manipur as per the Census of India in 2001.

Population of major Scheduled Tribes, 2001 Census⁷

Sl. no.	Name of the Scheduled Tribe	Total Population	Proportion to the total ST population
1	All Scheduled Tribes	741,141	100%
2	Thadou	182,594	24.6
3	Tangkhul	146,075	19.7
4	Kabui	82,386	11.1
5	Paite	49,271	6.6
6	Hmar	42,933	5.8
7	Kacha Naga	42,013	5.7
8	Vaiphei	38,267	5.2
9	Maring	23,238	3.1
10	Anal	21,242	2.9
11	Zou	20,567	2.8
12	Any Mizo (Lushai) tribes	15,164	2.0
13	Kom	14,602	2.0
14	Simte	11,065	1.5

R. Brown, the then political officer made the following observation 1873 about the hill-men who inhabit the mountain tract of the country under Manipur rule. They were divided amongst themselves into innumerable clans and sections,

⁷ Census of India, 2001, Manipur (Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes), Office of the Registrar General, India, http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_manipur.pdf, (accessed date 12th may, 2011)

each having slight differences in language, customs or modes of dress, and may be considered generally into two great divisions of Nagas and Kukis. Although no abrupt boundary line can be drawn between the tracts of the country occupied by the two races of Nagas and Kukis, it may be taken for granted that a line drawn about a day's journey south of the Government road or even at the present day less, running east of Kachar (cachar) to the Manipur valley (about 24.74 degree north latitude) would represent the boundary which separates the two races, the Nagas lying to the north of this line, the Kukis to the South (Brown, 1874).

1. 3 The People: Historical Location of the Kukis

After India's independence and Manipur's merger with the Indian union in 1972, the hill people in Manipur was officially classified into three groups—Naga, Chin-Kuki and Old-Kuki. The Nagas of Manipur comprises of the tribes like Tangkhul, Kabui (Rongmei and Pumei), Kacha Naga (Liangmei & Zemei collectively known as Zeliangrong), Mao, Maram, Maring, Angami and Sema under the Official Classification of Tribes in Manipur by the Directorate of Tribal Welfare & Backward Classes, 1981. The Kukis of Manipur comprises of the tribes like Gangte, Hmar, Lushai, Paite, Simte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou, Ralte and Moyong under the same Classification, whereas Old Kuki comprises of the tribes like Aimol, Chiru, Koirang, Kom, Anal, Chothe, Lamkang, Koirao/Thangal, Purum and Monsang.⁸ In the present day, Manipur's population is broadly categorised into three major ethnic groups: the Meiteis of the valley, the Nagas and Kukis of the surrounding hills. Thereby, the tribes of Manipur can be roughly placed under two sections—the Kukis and the Nagas.

The word Kuki is a generic term, which includes a number of tribes and clans. 'Kuki' refers to an ethnic entity spread out in a contiguous region in Northeast India, Northwest Burma, and the Chittagong Hill tracts in Bangladesh. The

⁸ Official Classification of Tribes in Manipur by the Directorate of Tribal Welfare & Backward Classes, 1981

'dispersal' of the people by the existing international boundaries is the result of initial British colonialists' deliberations. The terminology 'Kuki' appears to have originated in Sylhet. In erstwhile East Bengal, Elly refers to 'the tribe called Kuki by the Bengalis.' An attributed meaning of the term is 'hill people' (Haokip, 2002).

The research will focus on the Thadou dialect-speaking group of the Kuki community. The origin of the word 'Kuki', is not known but it first appears in Bengal in the writing of Rawlins entitled "Cucis or mountainers of Tipra" in Asiatic Researches in 1792 (As cited in Shaw, 1929, p. 11). The second record on the Kuki tribes in general appeared in the Asiatic Researches, volume VII, in a paper from the pen of Surgeon McCrea, dated 24th January 1799 (Macrae, 1919). The term Kuki is a canopy term covering large number of tribes and sub tribes other than the Nagas. The Thadous are the most numerous branch of the Kuki group and constituted the second most populated tribe in the state of Manipur. The term Thadou literally means 'to kill' (Tha) and 'to resist' (dou).

The Thadou and their co-tribe are usually spoken of as new Kukis, owing to the fact that they came from the Lushai hills later than the other hill tribes, the so-called old Kukis. The group belonging to New Kuki especially the Thado (Thadou) group are Northern Chins who were pushed out of the Chin Hills areas into Manipur and into the Hills of Burma and Assam by Lushais in the middle of the nineteenth century (Lehman, 1980, p. 5). In the words of G.A. Grierson:

The Thado (Thadou) tribe formally lived in the Lushai and Chin Hills where they had established themselves after having expelled the Rangkhoh⁹ and Bete tribes. They were afterwards expelled both from the Chin Hills and the Lushai Hills, and are now chiefly settled in Manipur, in the Naga Hills, and in South Cachar (Grierson, 1990, p. 59).

The language used by them belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family (ibid).

⁹ They have been classed as the old-kuki sub-group by Grierson and are now settled mainly in Hill Tippera and North Cachar

The Thadous' are a nomadic race, and do not occupy their villages for more than two or three years at a time. Their migration was never smooth. It was in most cases either followed or caused by inter-tribal feuds. If the opponents were stronger, and in fact they were so in many cases, the former had to move out of the place and migrate elsewhere. In addition, their practice of shifting cultivation in the hills impelled them to move on from one place to another. Shakespear had noted that the Thadou-Kukis seldom cultivate the same piece of land for more than two years in succession. Therefore, they need much space, and the desire for new land, coupled with the fear of stronger clans, had led the whole race in adopting a more or less vagabond mode of life (as cited in Ray, 1990, p. 20). Besides territorial migration, there was another form of migration, which may be called local migration. Hutton have recorded that the Thado are a scattered tribe inhabiting parts of the North Cachar Hills, the Naga Hills, and the Manipur state and spreading east into Burma in the Chin Hills and Somra Tract (as cited in Shaw, 1929, p. 4).

In the writing of James Johnstone, the Kukis entered the hill tracts of Manipur between the year 1830 and 1940 and caused much anxiety to the older inhabitants (Johnstone, 1987, p. 25). Colonel McCulloch, the British political agent of that time settled the fierce tribes along exposed frontiers to act as buffers against other recalcitrant tribes (ibid, p. 26). Since McCulloch's "buffer policy" planted Kuki settlements at strategic places barriers, the Kukis have been found settled in scattered pattern all over the Manipur hills. Kukis constitute an overwhelming preponderance in Churachandpur district, Sadar Hills subdivision of Senapati district and Chandel district. Otherwise, they are found mingling with Tangkhul (Naga) tribes in Ukhrul district, Mao-Maram-Paomai (Naga) tribes in Senapati district, and Zeliangrong (Naga) tribes in Tamenglong district (Gangte, 2007, p. 95).

The British ethnographers' like Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear divided them into two broad groups—(a) old and (b) new (Shakespear, 1975). The westward and the northern migration of the Kukis from the Chin area was the result of a series of

various tribal movements of migration in which the stronger tribes drove the weaker tribes farther. In the last half of the eighteenth century, the old Kukis first migrated from the Lushai land and settled down in Manipur and Cachar. To them belonged, Paite, Anal, Purum, Chiru, Hmar, and Kom (ibid). Mackenzie (2007, p. 146) records' the old Kookies were reported in 1853 to be in four clans, viz., Khelema, Ranthai, Bete, and Lamkron. According to Shakespear (ibid, p. 146), record of the appearance of the Old Kuki clans of Manipur is found in the Manipur Chronicle as early as the sixteenth century. He state the possible reason for their migration as, "...probably quarrels with their neighbours, coupled with a desire for better land, combined to cause the exodus, and the movement, once started, had to continue till the clans found a haven of rest in Manipur...(ibid, p. 146)."

The section of the Kukis who had been driven by the powerful Lushai clans and migration to Manipur around the middle of the 19th Century were called the new Kukis (Bhadra, 1975, p. 11). For Shakespear, the term New Kukis is synonymous with the Thado (Thadou) clan (Shakespear, 1975, p. 187). Besides the fact that the old Kukis came to the British territory earlier and the new Kukis later, there existed a considerable organisational division between two groups of people (Bhadra, 1975, p. 11). The difference is discussed by Lieut. R. Stewart who wrote:

There is no regular system of government among the old Kookies, and they have no hereditary chiefs, as is the case with the new ones. They appoint a headman called the Ghalim over each village; but he is much more of a priest than a potentate is, and his temporal power is much limited. Internal administration among them always takes a provisional form (Stewart, 1855, p. 620).

Whereas in the case of the New Kukis, they have a more centralised and autocratic nature of leadership. Therefore, they have a great power of combining effectively against a common enemy and they were much feared by other tribes (Palit, 1919, p. 64).

1. 3. 1 Origin

In the absence of written records, there is a need to depend on mythological and folkloric beliefs in order to get an idea of the origin of the subject of study. Barthes in, "Mythologies" asserts that myth conceals the socio-political construction of phenomena, and their contestability both conceptually and in practice, by implanting additional claims in apparently factual statements. 'Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact' (Barthes, 1957, p. 143). According to popular mythology, the race has emerged from "*Khul*" – the subterranean of the earth. This theory is parallel for all Chin Kuki-Mizo tribes of Northeast India (Ray, 1990, p. 17) and Myanmar. The story of their origin is that they used to live under the earth, or rather inside it. There is a variation in the theories regarding the probable location of the '*Khul*' (Ginzatuang, 1973, p. 5).

McCulloch (1959, p. 55) contended that the Kukis were known as Khongjai also in Manipur, and that they bring their progenitors from the bowels of the earth. They relate the manner of their reaching its surface thus: One day their King's brother was hunting hedgehogs, when his dog in pursuit of one entered a cavern, and he waiting for its return path remained at the mouth. After lapse of sometime, the dog not having returned, the master was determined to go in and see what had become of it. He did not find the dog, but observing its tracks and following them, he found himself suddenly on the surface of the earth. The scene presented to his view both pleased and astonished him. Returning to his brother, he related about his adventure, and counselled him to annex the new country to his territory, which the king did (Gangte, 1993, p. 14).

William Shaw (Shaw, 1929, p. 24) had his own version of the origin of the Kukis, which he recorded from the collected verbal information as follows: The story of their origin is that they used to live under the earth, or rather inside it. *Noimangpa* was the Chief of this subterranean region. One *Chongthu*, a relative of

Noimangpa, went hunting porcupines in the jungle with his dog. He discovered a large hole. He perceived through this that the upper crust of the earth was uninhabited and there was a great darkness. This darkness, which lasted for seven days and seven nights, is called "*Thimzin*" by the Thadous. *Chongthu* was so happy at the discovery that he gave up his hunt and went back to his house. He conjured up ideas of forming a village of his own on the earth and planned accordingly. Just about then, *Noimangpa*, the Chief of the underworld was performing the '*Chon*'¹⁰ festival in which everyone had to attend, including *Chongja*, elder brother of *Chongthu*. *Noimangpa*'s son, *Chonkim* was also present. During this feast *Chongthu* started waving his sharp sword so vigorously that he injured some of the folks present, at which all became angered. This action of *Chongthu* was premeditated as he thought that by doing so he would be turned out from the underworld and thus has an excuse for going out to the upperworld and forming a village of his own. When *Noimangpa* heard the news of *Chongthu*'s behaviour, he proclaimed that *Chongthu* had better live in Heaven, meaning thereby he be killed. *Chongthu* hearing of *Noimangpa*'s wrath at once prepared to migrate out of the hole in the earth which he saw and which is spoken of as '*Khul*' by the Thadous (Gangte, 1993, p. 15).

According to Gangte (1993, p. 16), a local historian, in the genealogical tree from *Chongthu* to *Thadou*, the persons are mythical and, therefore, when festivities entailing repetition of the genealogical tree of the *Thadous* became necessary, the *Thempu* starts from *Thadou* and not from *Chongthu*. Further, from *Chongthu* to *Thadou* there were no different languages, and animals and spirits, as well as the mythical ancestors lived in peaceful co-existence. The hole in the earth called '*Khul*' is said to be at the source of the '*Gun*' river, which seems to be identical with the Imphal River in Manipur State. Etymologically, the word '*Gun*' in the

¹⁰ *Chon* festival is the apogee of all rituals and celebrations (Chongloi, 2008, p. 142). Ideally, the ritual requires the sacrifice a pair of all types of domesticated animals like pig, goat, mithun, fowls, dogs, etc. The duration of the ritual is for seven days. Musical instruments, singing and dancing and lavish supply of food and drink to all the villagers in a village is the hallmark of the ritual (Goswami, 1985, p. 225).

Thadou dialect refers to the 'Imphal River'. In all the stories and legends of the Thadous, the river '*Gun*' is frequently mentioned and is of great fame (Shaw, 1929: 24-26). Thus, for a society with no written records, myth becomes history to form a probable or acceptable presumption of origin from which they can derive an explanation to their identity. As Vansina (1985) had said, oral traditions are documents of the present but are expressions of the past. Narratives therefore, play an important role in shaping the identity of a person or the community as a whole.

1. 3. 2 Migratory Routes

Historians and scholars also have their own opinion on migration routes of the group known as Kukis. According to Horatio Bickerstaffe Rowney:

The Kookies (Kukis) are a numerous race whose proper limits have not been defined even to this day. Their original settlements seem to have been in the hill recesses to the south of the Hylakandy valley (district in Cachar), a wild and difficult country of large extent, whence they have branched out northwards into Hill Tipperah (Tripura), and southwards into Chittagong (in Bangladesh) (Rowney, 1990, p. 179).

One theory proposed that the Kukis came out of China during the reign of Chinese Emperor Chinglung or Chie'nlung, around 200 B.C. This theory was supported by Zawla, a Mizo historian who claimed that the Kukis came out of the Great Wall of China in about 225 B.C., during the reign of Shih Hungti whose cruelty was then at its height (as documented in Gangte, 1993, p. 17). Another scholar Enriquez was emphatic in his claim which he based on scientific data that Mongolian races, who now occupy South-East Asia, and the North East India, originated from the Western China lying between the sources of the Yangtze and the Hwang-Ho Rivers, and migrated in three waves as follows (as cited in Gangte, 1993, p. 17):

1. The Mon-Khmer (Talaing, Pa Lung, En Riang, Ma, Pale, Khais and Annimite) which included Khasis

2. The Tibeto-Burman comprising Pyu-Burmese-Kachin, Kuki-Chin and Lolo
3. The Tai-Chinese, which included Shan, Siamese and Karen (ibid, pp. 17-18)."

Hutton in 1929 in one of his monographs described the migratory routes of the Kukis and the scattered settlements of the Kukis:

For a very long time the Kuki-Chin groups of tribes, pressed from behind Kachins moving Southwards from Chins, and been migrating down the course of the Chindwin River, and some turned back perhaps by the Bay of Bengal, had then moved slowly North West and North wards again, driving out or incorporating previous inhabitants of what are now parts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of East Pakistan, the Chin Hills of Burma, the Lushai Hills of Assam, parts of the areas of Manipur State of the North Cachar Hills and the South of the Naga Hills (ibid, p. 18).

Lehman (1963, p. 11) observe history as showing that both hills and plains peoples have moved from 'the general region of South-West China and South-East Asia over considerable distances for many centuries until the recent past (ibid, p. 19)'. Carey and Tuck wrote:

...the Kukis of Manipur, the Lushais of Bengal and Assam, and the Chins originally lived in what we now know as Thibet (Tibet) and are of the same stock; their form of government, method of cultivation, manners and customs, beliefs and traditions all point to one origin (Carey et al, 1983, p. 2).

1. 3. 3 Identities: Thadou or Kuki

The term "Thadou-Kuki" is likely to create some confusion because all the Thadous are Kukis but not vice-versa. Kuki is a broad term like Naga. The research will use the compromise term "Thadou-Kuki". In this regard, it is necessary to point out here the serious problem of identity of the term Kuki and Thadou. In fact, there are two views prevailing in the present scenario of the society. One is the pro-Kuki view and the other is the pro-Thadou view. While the pro-Thadou group went on insisting on the term Kuki as a foreign term and a baseless colonial construct for administrative convenience, the pro-Kuki group

insisted on a pan-tribal stand under the nomenclature Kuki (Ray, 1990, p. 19). The Thadou Versus Kuki controversy continues to be a contentious issue even to this day. The state government in 1987 recognised the Thadou dialect for all purposes including official correspondence. The pro-kuki group who claimed that Thadou was only a sub group or a clan of the Kuki tribe objected the issuance. According to the pro-Thadou group, the term "Kuki" is only a generic expression used by several tribes and that there is no specific tribe called Kuki (Singh, 1994, p. 646).

The scheduled tribe list of Manipur 1950 in fact recognised the term Kuki, but in the modified list of 1956, the term Kuki was omitted and the term Thadou was included. Consequently, the list of tribes in 1961 and 1971 censuses does not include the Kuki as tribe in Manipur. The word Kuki has been deleted from the Manipur list in which clans or sub-tribe like Gangte, Thadou, Vaiphei, etc. were prioritized (Singh, 1994, p. 646). As against this, the pro-Kuki group have time and again registered their voice of protest and even insisted on the revision of the list of scheduled tribes of Manipur and include Kuki in the list (Ray, 1990, p. 19).

The High Court had directed the Government of Manipur to constitute a committee of experts to go into the controversy whether it should be Thadou or Kuki tribe (Singh, 1994, p. 646). Ultimately, in compliance with the Gauhati High Court decision and based on the Expert Committee recommendation dated 03/02/1995, the Government of Manipur, Education Department issued an order No. 17/1/72-SE dated 12/05/1987 wherein it said that thereafter the language shall be recognised as "Thadou Kuki" language in supersession of the earlier two orders of even number dated 22/03/1977 and 03/01/1981 issue in favour of "Thadou language" and "Kuki language" respectively (Gangte, 2007, p. 93). According to the 1991 census¹¹, Kuki was listed at par with the other

¹¹ Table showing distribution of population in Manipur by Mother tongue according to 1991 census, Population of Manipur [Social Statistical Indicator] 2008, Directorate of Economics & Statistics, GOM, p. 61

tribes. The crises of identity manifesting fragmented identities of prioritizing clan or sub-tribe could be attributed to the recognition accorded to smaller ethnic groups as separate Scheduled Tribes (Gangte, 2007, p. 98).

In view of the above tension between groups about the nomenclature and identity of the terms, a compromise term “Thadou-Kuki” has been used here in this work. The use of the term “Kuki” in different places will mainly emphasise the “Thadou-Kukis” or the Thadou dialect-speaking group of the Kuki Tribes.

1. 4 Social Institutions in the Thadou Kuki Society

1. 4. 1 Chieftainship Systems

The Chieftainship system is weaved around the concept of privileges and obligations of both the chief towards the subjects and vice versa. The Kuki chiefs have the responsibility for care of public order and representation of the body politic. The obligations of citizenship include obedience to the law of the land and payment of tributes called ‘*changseo*’ or basketful of paddy to the chief. The rights of citizenship have been held to include care in sickness and old age; assistance in time of famine and disaster; protection by the courts of life, land and property (Firth, 1959, p. 254).

Land ownership is the exclusive right and prerogative of the chief. In other words, land and land title system of the Thadou-Kukis provide an important basis of legitimacy to the authority of the chiefs (Ray, 1990, p. 44). In the past, the people believed that these chiefs originally had connexion with the gods themselves, their persons was therefore, looked upon with the greatest respect and almost superstitious veneration, and their commands were in every case law (Stewart, 1855, p. 625). According to Stewart, “the Rajah (chief) is the sole and supreme authority in the village or villages under him, no one is competent to give orders or inflict punishments except through him” (ibid).

The institution of Thadou-Kuki chieftainship system might have emerged from the context of tribal wars in the past when a single authoritative figure was a necessity. In their grim struggle for existence and constant war with other tribes,



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they needed a strong leader who could maintain the cohesiveness of the society and protect it from external threat. Thus, the evolution of a strong and authoritarian chieftainship of the Thadou-Kukis in particular and the Kukis in general was a historical requirement for survival. This land control and the ownership system became the necessary condition for maintaining the community as a homogenous community aimed at providing a militant bulwark against the enemy tribe (ibid).

Traditionally, there were two kinds of chiefs among the Thadou-Kukis. One is the Clan chief or principal chief called "*Pipa*" who had an influence over a wider network of land. The second is named "*Haosha*" (*Haosa*) or territorial chief (Bhadra, 1975, p. 23). A traditional tribal authority has its own legitimacy, which is obtained by either descent or by the sanctity of customary rules. In the Thadou-Kuki society, the privilege of descent and the law of primogeniture are the two traditional factors determining the title of chieftainship (Ray, 1990, p. 7). Except for minor local variations, the Kuki polity is ordered into seven-tiered structure, with the chief or *Hausapu* as the head. According to Asok Kumar Ray (1951, p. 38) the Thadou-Kuki polity is ordered into seven-tiered structure, with the chief or *hausapu* as the head. He is assisted by the following offices:

1. *Semangpa* (prime-minister)
2. *Pachong* (secretary)
3. *Thiempu* (physician cum priest)
4. *Thihiu* (village blacksmith)
5. *Chonloi* (treasurer)
6. *Lom-upa* (youth director in charge of youth co-operative works)
7. *Kho-sam* (announcer of the decisions of the village council)

T.S. Gangte (1993, Pp. 130-132) has listed the council members into three offices:

1. *Khawsam* or *Lhangsam Pa*

He is the spokesperson of the council. Literally speaking he is the councillor in charge of information and broadcasting. He convenes meeting of the council,

conveys decisions of the Council to the public, and enforces or implements the decisions of the council. He may be asked to act in any capacity, such as in any capacity, such as, emissary, negotiator, mediator, depending upon his personal talent (ibid, p. 130).

2. *Thiempu* or Village Priest

Thiempu is the office of the village priest or medicine man. Literally speaking, he is the councillor-in-charge of public health in the truest sense of the term. Persons for this office are chosen from among those who knew the '*thiem-thu*' (the secret words of medicine). This office is very often regarded as hereditary, because the secrets of the medicines are not revealed to each and every person (ibid). He also performs incantation or presides over rituals in the process of settling disputes.

3. *Thih-kheng Pa* or Black-Smith

The blacksmith is attributed an important status in the village. This office goes to the person who has the highest dexterity in black-smithy (ibid).

Dr. Satkhokai Chongloi (2009) describes how the *Khosung Inpi* (village government) elects prominent person for three main offices: The *Khosung Semang* (Village administrator), the *Khosung Pachong* (Village Defence Minister) and *Khosung Lhangsam* (Village Public Relation Minister or Foreign Minister). Besides these three, he also cites the existent of two other offices, which indirectly influenced the council through the important role they play in the society. The *Khosung Thempu* (Village Priest) is the councillor-in-charge of public health. He used his skill in witchcraft in curing the sick and dealing with supernatural elements in the village. The *Kho Thih-khengpa* (blacksmith) is the authorized blacksmith of the village. In traditional village setting, he makes all agricultural tools, and repairs them free of cost. Like *Thempu*, he also receives "*Khotha*", where all villagers gave free labour by working in his agricultural field to show gratitude for his service (Chongloi, 2009).

The composition of the assembly also undergoes changes according to the new requirements of the changing times. This office of the Motbung Village Authority (Haosa) in 2009 comprises of the following portfolios--Chairman, Secretary, Joint Secretary, Accountant, Custom, two forests in charge, Defence, 4 members and *Lhangsam* or Information Secretary.¹² The term of the Village authority in Tujang Vaichong is for two years each. The members are chosen by the chief and sometimes by the recommendation of the people. The main meeting of the village is not more than twice a year. The other meetings are based on emergencies or according to the requirement of circumstances. The biggest meeting is the '*kumlhun assembly*¹³' where the administration of the village for the year is discussed. Women have never been elected as members in the village authority.¹⁴

The chief of the village and his council of ministers wields great authority and prerogatives over the villagers within the limit of their territorial jurisdiction. He performs judiciary, executive and legislative functions in consultation with his council of ministers. He is vested with absolute powers. The chiefs had to protect the interest of villagers by providing them security socially, politically and economically. The other important roles of the chiefs were to settle disputes, provide care and protection to his villagers. Chieftainship as an institution is the perennial source of customary laws and the retainer of tradition. It is a mechanism by which customary laws are interpreted in the social system.¹⁵

From the earliest times, the hill tribes practised different land use system in their domain. Though the entire land of the village theoretically belongs to the chief in the case of Thadou-Kukis, the village community who shared the land among

¹² Lhouvum, Vumkhopao, Joint Secretary Motbung Semang Pachong, Interviewed on 14th Oct, 2008

¹³ Assembly meeting at the end of the year

¹⁴ Kipgen, Lalboi, Secretary of Tujang Vaichong Village Authority, interviewed on 20th November, 2008

¹⁵ Kipgen, as presented in National Seminar on *Land, Identity and Development: Manipur Experience* (16th and 17th Nov, 2007), organized by ICSSR, NERC

themselves did the actual cultivation. The general condition that prevailed among the Kukis from the earliest times is that the land within the chiefdom is distributed to the villager for cultivation and homestead. The land allotted to the villagers cannot be sold. If a family in the village wishes to migrate to another village, the land will automatically return to the chief. The member of the chiefs council with the approval of the chief superintend and transact all business matters in connection with the land – cultivation, measurement, collection of tax, etc. when a particular land is to be cultivated for Jhumming purposes by a villager it has to be brought into the knowledge of the chiefs for approval. This shifting cultivation is necessitated by the absence of permanent allotment to the villagers.

By virtue of his status as a chief, the chief enjoyed certain privileges. The revenue exacted by these chieftains is paid in kind and labour. They are –

1. '*Changseo*' is one basketful of paddy paid to the chief annually by each household for the right of cultivation,
2. '*Samal*' is the right hind leg of all hunted animals,
3. "*Lamkai*" is the one rupee paid to the chief by a purchaser for every head of mithun or buffalo or cattle,
4. "*Khotha*" is a oneday in a year free labour to the chief by one person from each household¹⁶,
5. "*ThilKotkai*" is an export fee paid to the chief and
6. "*Sukai*" is the four rupees paid to the chief by the bridegroom when he takes a girl for his wife.

One of the chief characteristics of the Thadou-Kukis was the essential habit of migration due to their mode of cultivation and due to the organisation of

¹⁶ Lieut. R. Stewart, 1855, "Notes on The Northern Cachar," however records that the villagers were obliged to work in the chief field for four days in a year

Chieftainship (Bhadra, 1975, p. 25). Their migration was never smooth. It was in most cases either followed or caused by inter-tribal feuds. If the opponents were stronger, and in fact they were so in many cases, the former had to move out of the place and migrate elsewhere. Stewart, a colonial administrator wrote in 1855, "...Kookie (Kuki) is also a migratory animal, and never remains more than three or four years at the same place (Stewart, 1855, p. 7)." Shaw also wrote, "The Thadou is a migratory and moves from village to village on the slightest pretext (Shaw, 1929, p. 16)." The practice of Jhum cultivation necessitates the process of migration as a means to search for virgin soils to increase the superior quality of produce (Bhadra, 1975, p. 26). Another interesting issue in the Thadou society is the obsession for the formation of new villages in order to form new leadership. The younger son of the chief or an influential adversary of the chief can form a new village.¹⁷

1. 4. 2 Customary Court

By Customary Court, the paper meant the traditional law enforcing body comprising of the chief and his *Semang Pachong* (council of ministers). The Customary Court is the highest body of law in any villages dominated by the Thadou speaking group of the Kuki Tribe. It has as its constitution the traditional customary laws that are unwritten and retained orally. Colonial administrator like Lieut. R. Stewart (1855, p. 627) referring to the North Cachar wrote as early as 1855 the appointment of '*muntries*' by the Rajah (Chief) to assist

¹⁷ Permission from the chief of the village is necessary for one intending to establish a new village. Accordingly, the intending person first approaches the village chief for his approval. Once the approval is obtained, the intending person has to perform certain social and ritual functions. Along with some village elders, the person has to bring a jar of wine and a pig as offering to the chief of his native village. A feast arranged in the house of the village chief follows this. Counsellors of the village chief and other important elders are invited to the feast. On this occasion, the village chief holds discussion with his counsellors about the request for permission to build a new village. Only after such a discussion, the village chief expresses his approval or disapproval to such a proposal. If the village chief agrees to the proposal, the intending person is free to go ahead with building a new village. The pioneer automatically becomes the chief of the new village and every new inhabitant of the village is required to contribute a basketful of paddy to the village chief every year. This system of contribution of a measured quantity of paddy to the village chief every year is known as *Changseo*.

him in carrying on the affairs of the government. They are exempt from free labour and taxation that is due to the Raja from all villagers. The office is not, strictly speaking, hereditary, although in most cases, except when thoroughly incompetent, the son succeeds the father, but is given to those qualified for it, as being men of property and influence as well as of ability and good spokespersons (Stewart, 1855, p. 627).

Dr. Satkhokai Chongloi uses the phrase "*Khosung Inpi Thutanna*" or village court to describe it (Chongloi, 2009). The Chief's house or a separate one in the compound of the chief is used as the court. This Customary Court also exists in areas that are not under chieftainship system like Kangpokpi Urban Town.¹⁸ The term of the village authority is for two years in Tujang Vaichong, three years in Motbung and three years in Kangpokpi.

In settling disputes, the customary laws are respected and have an overall authority. Howard S. Becker (Becker, 1963) one of the early exponents of the interactionist approach argues that deviance is not a quality that lies in behaviour itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those who responded to it. From this point of view, deviance is produced by a process of interaction between the potential deviant and the agents of social control. Deviant behaviour or social deviance generally threatens social stability. A culture or society can function efficiently only if there is order and predictability in social life. Non-compliance to the norms threatens this order and predictability. The Customary Court ever since its inception has laid down rigid norms that have to be followed by every member in their jurisdiction. These laws are incongruence with the customary laws of the Kuki society. There are of course certain instances in which the laws are modified according to the context or the gravity of the situation. Besides mapping out the rules and regulation, they have also stipulated the mode of punishment for non-compliance of such laws.

¹⁸ Kangpokpi is not under chieftainship system but under the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee. It is under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration.

C.A. Soppitt (1893, p. 21) recorded the case of the Kukis in North Cachar Hills. All crimes, even the most serious, appear to have been punished by fine only. On any oath being taken, either on the restoration of peace between villages or between private individuals, the following is the procedure: A bear's or tiger's skull is placed upon the ground, a nettle-leaf, husk (paddy), and a sword blade. The persons (or person) to be sworn then step forward, and repeat the terms of the treaty or agreement, and, pointing to the skull, say – "If I break faith, may a bear or tiger, similar to the one this skull belonged to, devour me; may I be stung by the nettle now before me; may the seed I sow be as fruitless as this husk; and may I struck by a sword. Heaven and earth now witness this oath (Soppitt, 1976, p. 21)." He also records another practice, which he considers a very strange custom that was in force among all the Kukis as a method for testing the truth of a man's words. He wrote:

It being impossible to ascertain the respective veracity of two statements, the party interested agrees to appeal to the water-test. All the villagers are assembled, and proceed to some spot on a river where the water is deep. Here two bamboos are fixed firmly in the mud or gravel at the bottom. The priest of the village then cuts the throat of a white fowl on the brow of each disputant, allowing the blood to run down the face. Should the blood flow red in one case and blackish in the other, the matter is considered half proved, the red showing the man whose statement was true. To make matters certain the test has to be completed. At a given signal, both men plunge into the river, and by the aid of the bamboos, attempt to get to the bottom, and bring up some mud or a stone. The one who fails is the guilty party (Soppitt, 1976, p. 22).

William Shaw records the method of trial by chiefs. Both the parties bring a jar of *ju* (wine) each to the chief's house where the matter in dispute is tried. The old men¹⁹ of the village are usually present also and generally the influence of the *ju* make a compromise by the chief easy as most are well under the influence of it

¹⁹ By old men, Shaw must have meant the village elderly. The Kuki society being a highly gerontocratic society in the past had high regards for the wisdom of the aged population. Their grey hair commands respect from the rest of the population and they constitute an important vote banks in the village administration and legal proceedings.

before leaving and are so genially inclined that they will agree to a great deal (Shaw, 1929, P. 66).

Bloodshed is classified into two types--- (1) *Bil Tan Deh Keh* (injury in the ear and the forehead) and (2) *Thi-kiso* (murder). According Letpao Lhouvum²⁰ in the proceeding over the killing of a person, the redressal mechanism is slightly more elaborate as the act of terminating human life is considered the gravest of all crimes. There are fines stipulated to represent certain parts of the body.

- *Dahpi* (gong) – Represents the head of the victim
- *Khichang/ Khichoung* (beads or chain of beads made of cornelian stone) – represents the eyes
- *Khivui* (garland) – representing the umbilical chord

Moreover, the murderer and his family have to pay for certain materials that are necessary as per the customs for the decent burial of a death body.

- *Puondum* (Among the Thadou speaking clans, the prescriptive colour of the cloth should be black with two lines of white colour on the border, length-wise. This is no longer a compulsion today.)--for covering the dead body
- *Kosa* – After the dead body is taken out of the house, it is customary for the family of the deceased to feed the guest who had come to condole or to participate in the funeral.²¹ This is called 'Kosa'. It is also meant for purification of the house and to pray for blessing for the bereaved family so that no similar calamity would befall in the house after that.
- *Luongman*²² – price of the dead body

²⁰ Lhouvum, Letpao, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, Interviewed on the 13th Oct, 2008

²¹ Thuchih Gil Thulom, 2000 Mimkut Committee, Molvom, Nagaland, p. 3

²² I have not included the cultural meaning of '*luongman*' for this paper. *Loungman* in this paper would only apply to the price that the murderer has to pay to the victim's family as penalty for committing the crime.

As a redressive mechanism, *Sa-lam-sat* is a fine imposed on a guilty person paid in terms of mithun.²³ Another official term is *Hem Kham*, which literally means stopping the sharp edge of a knife is another important mechanism for maintaining peace and tranquillity. It means that the village chief has already avenged the death of the persons and no further action is required to avenge the death.²⁴ *Tol-theh* in its literal term means 'ground cleaning.' The guilty person has to bring a pig and a jar of wine due to the chief from the person who sheds any human blood in a village affray (Shaw, 1929, p. 66). In cases of theft, it is customary for the thief to return the articles stolen and to pay one mithun as compensation (ibid). Mithun as a penalty was the most common form of fine imposed in the past. This either has assumed the form of monetary transaction or been largely replaced by the pig. The penalty of a mithun is, of course, theoretical, and would not be exacted in serious cases or where the thief proved indecently contentious (Shaw, 1929, p. 66).

Victor Turner's (1957) book on 'Schism and Continuity in an African Society' helps us to understand the institution of the Customary Court in the Kuki society. The kind of redressive mechanism deployed to handle conflict and the sources of initiative to end crises, which are all clearly manifest in any social setting, provide valuable clues to the character of the social system. It is interesting at the way in which the punishment always entails distancing them from the things that matters most or actions that have direct consequences on their livelihood or status in the society.

Though all Customary Court in any Thadou speaking group of the Kukis will have similar customary laws that govern it, there is sure to be difference from region to region even as the structure remains the same. The difference could be due to modifications to suit the context or changing times or the manner in which it have been passed down orally from generation to generation. The main

²³ Lhouvum, Kailal, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, Interviewed on 12th Oct, 2008

²⁴ Guite, Haokholien, Chairmen of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Interviewed on 26th November, 2008

aim is to maintain tranquillity and normalcy in the social structure. The legitimisation mode of colonial authority and the independent set-up of the Indian state eroded the traditional tribal structure in many aspects. However, the customary court has survived the onslaught of various forces and agencies of time.

1.4.3 Customary Land Laws

1.4.3.1 The British Legacy

In general, before the advent of British rule in India, the regulation of people's use of forest was mainly done through the local customs (Kulkarni, 1987, p. 2143). The beginning of a systematic forest policy begun in 1855 when the then Governor General Dalhousie issued a memorandum on forest conservation (ibid). Under the Forest Act of 1878, forests were divided into (1) reserved forests, (2) protected forests, and (3) village forests (ibid). These regulations were formally initiated in 1894 (Anderson, et al., 1988, p. 36). Robert S. Anderson and Walter Huber explanation of the implication of the forests divisions is relevant to our field. They wrote, "Reserved forests were exclusively for the use of the Forest Department except for certain minor concessions, such as gathering of the fruit of the trees and cutting of the grass, on payment of small dues. In the reserved forests, the surrounding villagers had no rights other than the ones explicitly permitted by the state. The protected forests were also managed by the Forest Department, but the people of the surrounding villages had certain rights in them, such as gathering fruits and other produce of the trees, and cutting timber and wood specifically for the use of the villagers (but not for sale). They also had freedom to graze their livestock and hunt wild game for domestic purposes. Over the protected forests, the villagers had all rights not specifically taken away by the state. The village forests were the communal property of the villagers" (Anderson, et. al., 1988, p. 37). The forest laws in the post independence period like the National Forest Policy of 1952, National

Commission on Agriculture, 1976 and Indian Forest Bill 1980 are considered to be a continuation of the colonial forest policies.

1.4.3.2 The Patta System

The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960, do not govern the land systems in the hill areas, which is the general land law of Manipur. Section 1(2) of the said Act provides that “it extends to the whole of the state except the Hill area thereof.” The State Government may, however extend the whole or any part of the Act to any of the hill areas, except 105 villages in the plain and sub-montane zones inhabited by hill tribes. Therefore, customary laws govern all matters relating to lands in the hill areas (Das, 1995, p. 49). As regard the patta system, there is a difference between the patta in valley and those in the hill areas of Manipur. Patta in respect of lands are known to be in existence as early as 1892. However, patta system as envisaged in Assam land and Revenue Regulation 1896 was introduced when the said Regulation was extended to Manipur Valley. Owners of lands who are liable to pay revenue were given a Patta signed by the Deputy Commissioner, which recognised the rights of the owner in the lands covered by the patta. These rights were heritable and transferable (Das, 1989, p. 21).

During the British period, the tribal chiefs in the hills of Manipur were given individual rights of ownership with a provision for the rights to remain in their ancestry. The government formally recognized the Chief’s right to his land. In this case, the document issued by the Sub-division officers or District Magistrates were treated as equivalent to the patta in the valley and in certain hill areas where MLR & LR was enforced in the post independent era (Gangte, 2010, p. 132-133).

1.4.3.3 Case Studies

Each village has specific land laws laid down as per the customary laws of the society. Let us take the case of the three areas – Tujang Vaichong, Motbung and

Kangpokpi to understand the land laws. The land laws under chieftainship system vary slightly from village to village. The recorded land laws represent the general social regularities beneath which may be hidden contradictions and eruptions in the social structure. Tujang Vaichong under Imphal-Tamenglong Road²⁵ is under Kangpokpi Police Station. Tujang Vaichong is around 40 kms away from Kangpokpi, and Kangpokpi is around 50 km north of Imphal. It is in the borderline between Senapati and Tamenglong district. There are many villages between Kangpokpi and Tujang Vaichong. Mrs. Konkhochong Kipgen, acting chief of the village opined that the chieftainship system acts as a cultural retainer and preserver and a reservoir for various cultural practices and customs. There is a difference between those who are temporarily elected like the village authority and the permanent chief in terms of the sense of responsibility attached to it. Moreover, commercialisation in terms of forest produce cannot really seep in the jurisdiction of the chieftainship system. Regarding the land laws, the following points have been recorded²⁶--

1. The villagers cannot sell the land allotted to them as gift-deeds by the chief to an outsider who has no plans to permanently settle in the village. The lands allotted are therefore not transferable, but is attributable to the same ancestry. The villagers are in possession of it as long as they are in the village and directly go back to the chief in case he wants to migrate to another village. Therefore, it is equivalent to temporary ownership and they cannot use it as collateral.
2. There are also some restrictions regarding forest laws. The chief opened some areas every year to the villagers for jhumming or *thinglhang lei* and for cutting woods in the mountains. The villagers have to seek the chief's permission to lease out the land to them. They have to bring with them a rooster as a token or

²⁵ Imphal-Tamenglong Road is popularly known as 'IT road' by the local inhabitants of Kangpokpi and Tujang Vaichong village. IT road is a road in Kangpokpi town in Senapati district that leads to Tamenglong district. Tujang Vaichong is a village in the border of the two districts.

²⁶ Based on the interview of the acting chief (Mrs. Konkhochong Kipgen on 9th Nov, 2008) and Secretary of Village Authority member (Mr. Lalboi Kipgen on 20th Nov, 2008)

this is also done through the traditional '*cha-omna*' (where tea is served to the chief before a request is put forward). The permission granted is valid for a year and have to be renewed every year. For cutting of woods, the chief opened the forest for the public for about two-three months (mainly in the month of December, January and February). During that period, the villagers have to collect enough woods to last for their consumption throughout the year. In exceptional cases, a new settler can get access to the woods to build their house. However, the restriction is against using these woods for commercial purposes.

3. There are three types of forest area –

- i) Open reserved area
- ii) Protected area
- iii) Village area

4. The village homestead –

- i) There are no individual lands with proper patta system but there are paper deeds
- ii) The individual land are mostly allotted by the chief without patta system
- iii) The settlement laws regarding those who are residing in the homestead area are –
 - a) to dutifully pay the '*changseo*' or village fund traditionally in the form of a basket of paddy.
 - b) to abide by laws laid down in the villages meant for citizens
 - c) not to steal or cause problems or distort law and order

New settlers who had taken membership in the village can take enough woods in the village enough to build their house. They have to seek the permission of the chief. They have to take membership in the local church. Regarding religious worship, no other church besides the Kuki Baptist convention is allowed in the

village. The church has a history of being the first Kuki Church in Manipur and established way back in 1916. Natives cannot sell the homestead land or field, lease or put as collateral the land allotted by the chief. New settlers are also made to take an oath not to get involved in unlawful activities like thieving, killing, to abide by the rules and regulations in the village etc. and they are told the consequences or punishment for non-conformity to the laws in the village. They are made to vow to be a good citizen. Leasing or selling out of land to non-tribal or neighbouring villagers is strictly prohibited as per the local law.²⁷ There are however, some Nepalis (originally migrants from Nepal) settling there who play an important role in the economy of the village. Most houses leased out their wet land cultivation to the Nepalis and they share the harvest in halves by a system known as "*tangkhai-chabi*." Still, others rent cows and oxens from them for tilling the field. The house tax for each house paid annually is Rupees 15, which is collected by the chief and submitted it in bulk to the government through the SDO in charge (ibid).

Motbung village is located on the National Highway 39 in Manipur, which is about 26 kms from Imphal, the capital. The name Motbung is derived from the abbreviation, "*Mol ong tuo bu um na gam*" which means a land that lies between two hills and is well off in food grains. Motbung is the result of the union of many small villages who had come together at the initiation of the first chief Pu Lunneh in the 1930's. Chieftainship system is still functional to this day. The elected village authority members consisting of 13 members assist the Chief. The office is known by the name "*Motbung Semang Pachong*" or "Motbung Village Authority (Haosa)."²⁸ Women have never been represented in the council. As per the chief census of 2008, the household population in the village was 609.²⁹ The village is divided into ten small neighbourhoods.

²⁷ Based on the interview of the acting chief (Mrs. Konkhochong Kipgen on 9th Nov, 2008) and Secretary of Village Authority member (Mr. Lalboi Kipgen on 20th Nov, 2008)

²⁸ Kaikhosei, S.L., Chief of Motbung Village, Interviewed on 13th October 2008

²⁹ Motbung Village Authority (Haosa) Record Book, 2008

The main land laws³⁰ in the village were:--

1. Annual tax of rupees 50 per house or 1 basket of paddy (*changseu*)

2. The forest is divided into two areas—

- i. There is the Protected Forest Area, where no woods are allowed to be cut. For violating the laws in the protected area, there was an instance where a villager was fined '*voh-cha*'³¹ or 'pig' for encroaching and violating the rules of the protected area. He had cut down some trees for his personal purpose.
- ii. The second type is the Open Reserve Area, where activities like jhumming, grazing and firewood collecting were allowed to be done. Villagers are allowed access to firewood, grazing, woods for new village settlers and jhumming (under the direction of the chief who specifies the site for the year cultivation). The non-tribals (mostly Nepali migrants) pay grazing tax whereas for other villagers, everything is covered under the annual tax or '*changseu*'.

3. In the village cemetery, only those who have membership in the village have the right to bury their dead, done through the Church. Only people who have membership in the village can have membership in the church. There is a special consideration for outsiders or visitors³² in case of emergencies. They have to plead with the chief through the traditional '*cha om*'³² or serving a kettle of tea to the village chief.

³⁰ Kaikhosei, S.L., Chief of Motbung, Interviewed on 13th October, 2008 and S.L. Vumkhopao Lhouvum, Joint Secretary of Members of Village Authority

³¹ It is the custom of the Thadou-Kukis in particular and the Kukis in general to be penalized for a wrong act in terms of pigs.

³² Discussion and negotiations of any forms whether dispute or alliance is made over tea, which is the modern version of the traditional practice of serving rice beer. The initiating party has to make the tea and the tea is dranked by both the parties to mark an agreement.

4. New settlers will have to get the permission of the chief. No villagers can buy or sell land to an outsider without the chief's permission. Settlers (in rent, esp. Nepalis) will have to take registration after which they can access some of the rights due to a villager.

5. The leasing or selling out of land to non-tribal is by actual norm of customary laws not allowed but there are exceptional cases of intermarriage between the tribal and non-tribal where consideration has to be made especially when the tribal spouse is an influential one. Nevertheless, they cannot enjoy real membership in the village.

6. There can be no commercial transaction of land to people of other villages without the chief's permission but this is not necessary in the case of land transaction between two members of the village. Punishment for offence ranges from banishment from the village or an order to the seller to buy it back from his client.

7. The village homestead comprises of two types of land –

1. There are individual lands with proper patta system.³³ They also call it 'dag-chitha' or paper deeds. Patta is actually not legal as the whole land is in the name of the chief. Temporarily patta or patta for namesake is taken for security sake to avert land conflict. The term 'gift-deed' by the chief is applicable.

2. Individual land allotted by the chief without patta system

In the case of disputes over boundary lines or landmarks, "*Khaokikai*" is done in which a rope is placed in the location where the Chief deliberates is the line of demarcation between the conflicting parties. The disputing parties have to forward a petition to the chief. The chief will summon the village authority who

³³ This pattas are actually paper deeds and differ with the pattas of the GOI. As for Kangpokpi, which is not under chieftainship system, the Sub-Division Officers or District Magistrates, under whose jurisdiction the village landfall issues documents, which is considered to be equivalent to Patta in the valley (Gangte, 2010, p. 132).

will together set a date—both the parties are summoned to the court, which is in the courtyard of the chief.

Motbung is a village that is blessed with rocks of big size and good quality. This is evident from the fact that many fencings are made entirely of rocks. This forms an important component in the house building material of the people in Manipur. Therefore, it forms an important raw material for business enterprises. All the rocks in the riverbed of the Imphal River, which flows through Motbung are considered to be the property of the chief. The villagers take out these stones with the permission of the chief. The *Hausa (Chief)* will distribute the land area or draw a boundary line or put landmarks for each person to avoid conflict. They have to pay a certain amount to the chief. It is difficult to actually state that the following laws apply in the land because new laws will be formulated according to new cases. There is a different way of dealing with non-tribals and tribals on the issue of membership.³⁴

Kangpokpi represents altogether a different entity. It is not under chieftainship system but under the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee.³⁵ It is under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration. The District Council conducted the general election. There are fifteen members in the committee and the term is for three years. The required qualification is that he should be 30-45 years and above and should be a permanent settler for at least 5 years in Kangpokpi town.³⁶ There has never been a woman member in the committee ever since its inception. However, the president and the secretary of the

³⁴ Lhouvum, Vumkhopao, Joint Secretary Motbung Semang Pachong, Interviewed on 14th Oct, 2008

³⁵ The meeting of the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee is done at least once every month. Besides the compulsory meeting, there is the emergency meeting that is conducted according to the requirement of the circumstances. The biggest assembly is held at the end of the year. The members do not have a salary. However, an honorary pay of rupees 1000 is paid to the Chairperson, Vice chairperson and Secretary. The others are paid Rs. 500. Moreover, a sitting allowance of Rs. 100 is paid to all authority members on every meeting.

³⁶ Guite, Haokholien, Chairman of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee Interviewed on 26th November, 2008

Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation (the prominent and only women organisation in Kangpokpi in the secular sphere) are invited to attend the meetings of the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee over community issues.³⁷ Chieftainship system has never existed in any form in Kangpokpi. The number of house as per the 2008 census is 1662. The town is divided into fifteen wards. The appropriate term is hill-urban, which is purely under district council. The apex governing body is the district council. In administration matters, the local customary laws are applied side by side with general administration system of the Indian government.³⁸

Land laws are still based on the customary laws. Jhumming is mostly done on *T. Khullien Moul*, a mountain owned by the neighbouring Naga village. They leased out the land to the people of Kangpokpi who have to pay taxes according to the size of the land allotted to them. The prices ranging from Rupees 200 to above based on the area size of the land. The tax paid is called '*gam-pan*' or '*lam-pan*.' Wet-Rice cultivation or *phailei* is very scarce. They are mostly done in the neighbouring villages like Lungpho gam, kaithel manbi or the villages in Imphal-Tamenglong Road like Tujang Vaichong, Gelnel, Bungmoul etc. There is restriction against taking sand from the riverbeds as this might cause landslides. If there is a vacant plot, then an interested contender can approach the authority and register for membership. He still has to register if he wants to buy a plot of land that belongs to another. If a villager wants to sell his land to a person of another village, he has to inform the KUTC. A different form of patta land has entered into Kangpokpi and it is called *jamma bandi* or *Dag Chitha*. Hill house tax paid annually is rupees 15. The KUTC collects them and pays them over to the ADC office.³⁹

³⁷ Haokip, Mrs.Hechin, President of the Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation, Interviewed on 27th Dec, 2009

³⁸ Guite, Haokholien, Chairman of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Interviewed on 26th November, 2008

³⁹ *ibid*

1. 5 Principles Governing the Social Structure

1. 5. 1 The *Tucha*-*Songgao* Relationship

Robin Fox has rightly said, "The study of kinship is the study of what man does with these basic facts of life – mating, gestation, parenthood, socialization, sibling ship etc. Part of his enormous success in the evolutionary struggle lies in his ability to manipulate these relationships to advantage (Fox, 1967, p. 30)." The first step for a new household (the younger married sons) is to establish its family *Tucha* and *becha* through the initiative of the eldest brother (the father may be alive and be the initiator but the deed is credited to the eldest brother) (Chongloi, 2008, p. 131). In the Thadou society, there are three sets of relatives- the *tucha*, the *becha* and the *songgao*⁴⁰ who play an important role and constitutes the strongest strand in the fabric of the constitution of the

⁴⁰ Specific duties and obligation assigned to the '*Tucha*' and '*Sanggao*' relatives in relation to the ego-

- 1) If a ego kills an animal in compliance with his social obligation for throwing a feast, his '*Tucha*' relative has to dress the meat.
- 2) The '*Sanggao*' relative of a ego can claim the corpse of the latter is mother or wife. The '*Tucha*' Relative is bound to give the former one '*mithun*' to the latter as the price of the corpse. This is due to the practice of the bride price system, where the ego's mother or wife relative (*Sanggao*) can claim the remaining balances of the stipulated bride price after their death.
- 3) At the time of death in the family of an ego, the '*Tuchas*' acts as the messengers to inform the close relatives of the sad news. The '*Becha*' may be termed as representative in nature or spokesman who have been vested with the full power and authority of an ego. The '*becha*' relatives, therefore, include the following categories of persons:-
 - 1) Male members of exogamous relatives;
 - 2) Male members of the same clan of the ego, except those of '*tuchas*' and '*bechas*';
 - 3) Close, reliable and bosom friends of a ego;
 - 4) Persons of ability who can efficiently shoulder the responsibilities associated with the '*becha*' relatives to act on behalf of ego.

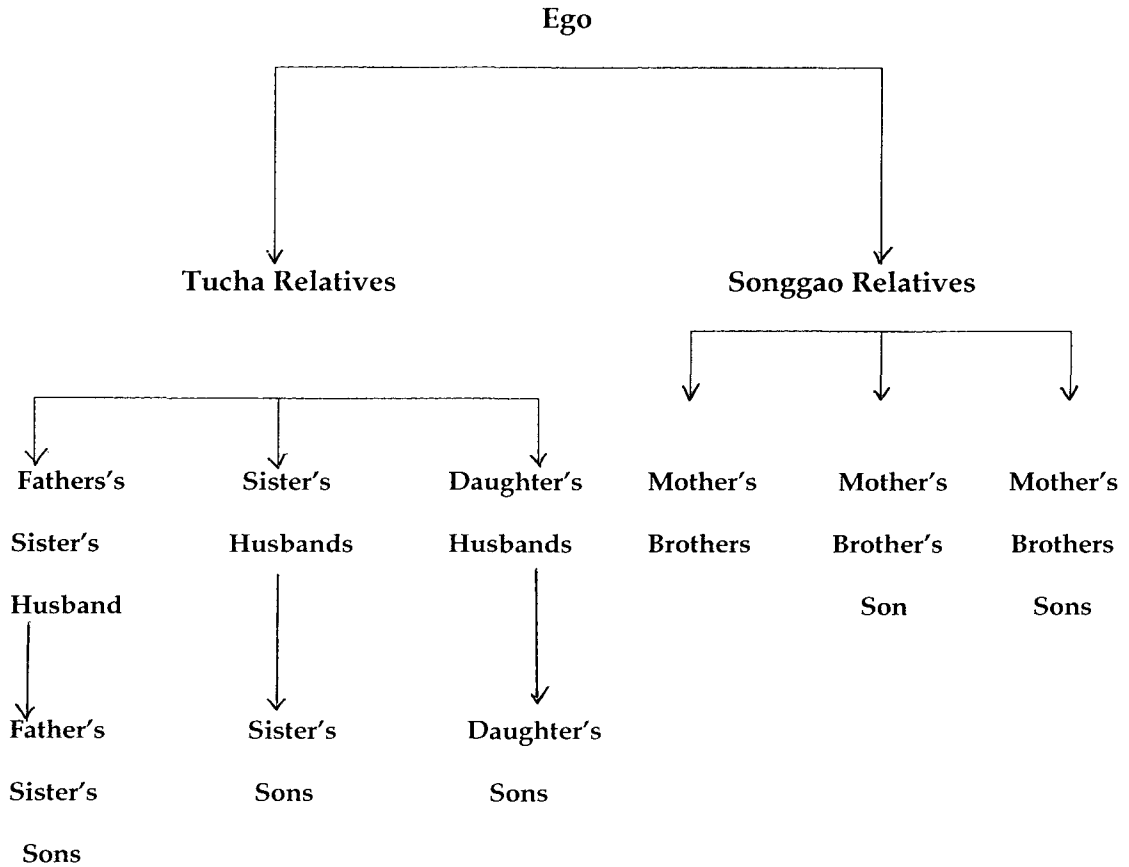
The duties and obligations of the *Bechas* include--

1. He is the de-jure performer of the social obligations.
2. Dress the meat of any animal killed by ego (Gangte, 1993).

society. These relatives are possible mainly because of the practice of marriage of mother's brother daughter or '*neinu*' by way of preference (Gangte, 1993, p. 46). These institutions could also have been set up because of the institution of hunting among the Thadou-Kukis. The Kuki life is arranged on a pattern of community living, where almost everything essential pertaining to economic, social, political and the religious life is shared among its members (ibid). In case a man organised a social occasion in which he kill an animal for feast, or even when he kills wild game during a hunting expedition, there are certain mode of distribution of its flesh by which the different parts of the kill are set apart for certain categories of relatives of the performer (ibid, p. 51).

Tuchas' offers assistance to the ego on any social related functions and in many occasions represents the ego. A *Tucha* is selected amongst the father's sister's family, sister's family or daughter's family known in the local terminology as '*pu-te*' family (ibid, p. 52). Thus, recruitment is done based on the relation that is form via the females in the family. This is surprising as the society is patrilineal and agnatic (related on the father's side). Social groups are recruited on the bases of blood ties or affinal ties (Fox, 1967, p. 36). The '*Becha*' is termed as a representative or spokesperson who has been vested with the full power and authority of an ego (ibid, p. 52). It is not mandatory for a '*becha*' to be chosen from amongst one relative or be a product of marriage alliance. They can be also be selected from one-clan members, a close friend or any person with the ability to shoulder the responsibilities required of the title (ibid). The two sets of people - the '*Tucha*' and the '*Songgao*' relatives to an ego-are given in the chart (Gangte, 1993, p. 47).

Genealogical Chart



'Tuchas' have a complete circle of social obligations by performing his role of 'Tucha' in relation to his 'songgao' relatives. The 'Tucha-Songgao' relationship resembles the 'Patron-Client' relationship, though the principles of the two relationships are different. While 'Tucha-Songgao' relationship is purely based on blood connections, which expresses loyalty and solidarity of the blood relationship and mutual voluntary obligation, 'Patron-Client' relationship, is based on economic consideration. The former is without profit motive, as against the motive of individual consideration, in the 'Patron-Client' relationship. 'Tucha-Songgao' relationship, is, in fact, a by-product of matrimonial alliance and can have no other consideration whatsoever (Gangte, 1993, p. 48). In marriage, the role of the 'Tucha' and 'Becha' is important as they accompany the parents of the boy to seek the hands of the prospective bride. The *Bechas* of the bride's family

and the bridegroom's family are given the responsibility of doing the necessary negotiations like fixing the date and deciding the bride price.

The influence of these three institutions is evident in all aspects of the Thadou-Kukis' social life. Although the missionaries and the British administrators were influential in changing many customary practices, this set of institutions has survived even today. Its importance percolates to all other institutional agencies like marriages, birth and death ceremonies and other family occasions (Das, 1985), p. 52). Therefore, it shows that the society recognised patrilineal and matrilineal descent groups simultaneously (also known as unilineal descent groups) as the basic political units (Fox, 1967, p. 51). "...Individuals recognize their cognates as kin and have obligations to them and expectations of them – in the payment of bride price, for example, or homicide payments (ibid)."

1. 5. 2 Customary Usages and Practices

The Thadou-Kuki society is 'patrilineal' as the rights and duties, including rights of inheritance and succession is passed in the male line.⁴¹ The conjugal family, which is, 'the one formed by the marriage of the two parents' is the accepted form of family in the society.⁴² Regarding the mode of addressing an elder, both descriptive and classificatory terminology of Kinship is used.⁴³ A curious feature is the multiple use of the term '*hepu*' which is used to address one's father's father, mother's brother, mother's brother son, mother's father, wife's brother, wife's father and generally for any aged elderly men or any

⁴¹ This based on Robin Fox definition of the term 'patrilineal' (Fox, 1967, p. 52).

⁴² Robin Fox gives the definition of 'conjugal family' (Fox, 1967, p. 37).

⁴³ The study of relationship to terminology can be traced to Lewis Morgan who distinguished two types of kinship terminology – classificatory and descriptive terminology. Descriptive terminology is one, which refers to the exact relation of the person towards another whereas classificatory is a more general one, which fails to, distinguished all direct relatives from collateral relatives.

respectable man in the society.⁴⁴

In the Thadou-Kuki society, the elder brother or *Upa* has the right to enjoy certain privileges over younger brother or *naopa* (Das, 1985, p. 46). The elder brother and his descendants occupy a higher status than the younger brother and his descendants. The lineal segments of the kinship system also follow the same principle (ibid). The rule of primogeniture governs the system of inheritance among Thadou-Kukis. The eldest son of the family inherits property of the father. Inheritance goes by male line only and no female has any right to claim as heir of a person whether male or female. In the absence of male issue, inheritance will go to the sons of his eldest brother, and if he has no elder brother then to his younger brother, or sons. If he has no brother, the property goes to the nearest male line (Das, 1995, p. 66). In the past, girls were allowed to retain a small portion of any jewellery belonging to their mother (Soppitt, 1976, p. 16). "McCulloch's observation on the Thadou refers to three important features, namely, their attention to genealogy, the distinctions of clans and the respect paid to seniors (as documented in Das, 1985, p. 46)."

Marrying Mo Br Da (mother's brother daughter) or *Neinu* is the most preferred union among the Thadou (Das, 1985, p. 47). One, however, must not marry a girl from his father's side Fa Si Da or *Tunu* (ibid). Grierson wrote about the practice of the probationary form of marriage amongst the Thadou-Kukis:

The Thados (Thadous) buy their wives, and the price may be paid in money or through personal bondage⁴⁵ for two or three years (Grierson (1990, p. 60).

The wife-receivers have to pay bride price to the wife-givers, which in some cases to be supplemented by physical labour and ceremonial services by the

⁴⁴ *Hepu* is a term of very great respect, and if used outside its genealogical applicability, would only be so used to show particular respect (Bhandari, 1996, p. 420).

⁴⁵ The practice is also called the probationary form of marriage. The would be groom in order to show his prowess and ability to provide a good life to the would be bride, work for a period of time at girl's house.

former (Das, 1985, p. 49). This practice is termed under probationary form of marriage in sociology. In local terminology it is known as *kong-lo* which means “waist-earning”. It means the prospective groom has to prove his worth and capability of providing for the woman he aspires to marry by working for her family for a period (Gangte, 2008, p. 149).⁴⁶ The groom family is not allowed to pay the bride price in the full amount. On her death, the man has to pay the remaining sum called ‘*lounzman*’ to her nearest male relative.⁴⁷

The Kukis bury their death even before the advent of Christianity (Dalton, 1872, p. 52). Deaths are generally classified into three broad divisions, namely – (1) *Thi-pha* or natural death, (2) *Senhut Thi* or childhood death (up to the age of three) and (3) *Thi-sie* or unnatural death (Gangte, 1993, p. 107).⁴⁸ If a man dies without producing a male heir, his case is termed as *chapagap*, which means end of the main line of descent. Another such term is *ingap* meaning total extinction of the line of descent (Das, 1985, p. 48).

In the pre-colonial times, the Thadou-Kukis bury their death. Prior to the burial, the bodies were first allowed to lie in state for several days. Dalton wrote in the year 1872:

The bodies of great men were placed before slow fires till the flesh is effectually smoke dried, and then laid out dressed and equipped for a month or two, during which time open house is kept amidst great feasting. Eventually the body is buried with food and drink, and with the skulls of the animals slaughtered for the funeral feast a fence is made around the grave. It was one time considered essential that a fresh skull of a human victim killed for the occasion, should adorn the grave of a

⁴⁶ This runs parallel to the story in the book of Genesis in the Bible in which Jacob served his uncle Laban for 14 years for the hands of Rachel (Genesis, 29-31)

⁴⁷ Lhouvum, Kailal, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, interviewed on 12th October 2008

⁴⁸ A person who dies by accident like falling off a tree, drowning in water or is killed or murdered or takes his own life by committing suicide is called *thi-se* or unnatural death. The dead body of such person is not entitled to get proper funeral rites as he would have received if he met a natural death

raja, but Kukis settled in British territory have found it convenient to abandon this observance (Dalton, 1872, p. 52).

Combs were considered a sacred thing in the customs of the people. It is an ill omen to lose them and a man and his wife may use the same comb. When a man dies, his comb is supposed to be buried with him, and his near relations should by tradition break their combs and must roam with dishevelled hair for a few days before they renew them (ibid). The institution of '*Sawm*' as the dormitory of the able-bodied young men of the village as the primary means of initiation and education plays a significant role among the Kukis and is a manifestation of the lifestyle they lead (Gangte, 1993, p. 12). The form of agriculture common is Jhumming and rice is the staple food. Hunting was practised by means of traps and snares as also with their matchlock guns, which are also used in warfare (Meerwarth, 1919, p. 31).

Another important feature that characterised the society is the tendency to attribute a gender character or binary aspects to all aspects of the social system. Everything is gendered, not only in human relationships but also in the categories that people use to classify each element of the social systems. This is reflected in the practices that orient the social structure and is manifested in the hierarchies embedded in the society. There is gender-based division of labour. The colonial administrator Lewin wrote about the gender based division of work in the society in the year 1870. Housework is attributed as the work of women, while the men were employed in hunting, in cultivating, and in war (Lewin, 1870, p. 147). At the societal level, there is social arrangement of labour in which each section of the society whether it is the women, the youth, the children, the aged group are grouped based on the commonness of the agricultural related work that concerns them. This is called *Lom*, which is an organisational set-up for the purpose of agricultural activity (Goswami, 1985, pp. 95-96).

1. 6 Beliefs Systems and Modes of Worship

Even before the advent of the missionaries, the worldview of the Thadou-Kukis was a religious one. They attributed the existence of the cosmos to the supernatural. The Thadous' believe that *Pathen* who rules the universe gives life to everything (Shaw, 1929, p. 71). For them, *Indoi* usually kept in one corner of the house is the symbolism that affirms the ever presence of *Pathen* (God) at all times (Chongloi, 2008, p. 5). "A slanted mother pig skull, a piece of a he-goat's curved horn, bracelet, dao, a jar made from gourd, etc., are the various components that constitute an *Indoi* (ibid)." This believe in the existence of one Supreme Being as the creator and sustainer of all called, 'Chung *Pathen*' or 'Holy Father of above' is the core of the primal religion (ibid, p. 134).⁴⁹

The Thadou-Kukis also performs rituals for appeasing evil spirits of numerous types, not out of reverence for them as is the case of the *Pathien*, but for fear of the evil they can inflict on them. Some of the common disembodied spirits were:

1. *Gamhoise* means evil spirit of the jungle and his wife *Inmunse* means evil spirit of the house (Shakespear, 1975,p. 199). Together it means 'accursed place' by a combination of the two words. They are souls of the persons meeting unnatural death or *thi-se* (Gangte, 2010, p.30). "They are supposed to inhabit the densest forests on the highest mountain tops, and when passing through such their dread names are never mentioned (Shakespear, 1975, p. 199)."

2. *Joumi* is a spirit, which is said to be as tall as trees. *Jou* denotes 'a densely forested region', and *mi* means 'human' or 'dweller' (Chongloi, 2008, p. 139). They are reportedly very fond of chicken and kill them by throttling the neck and sucking its blood. The mere sight of them is enough to make people die out

⁴⁹ The Primal religion of the Thadou-Kukis is given in a more elaborate form in the subsequent chapter.

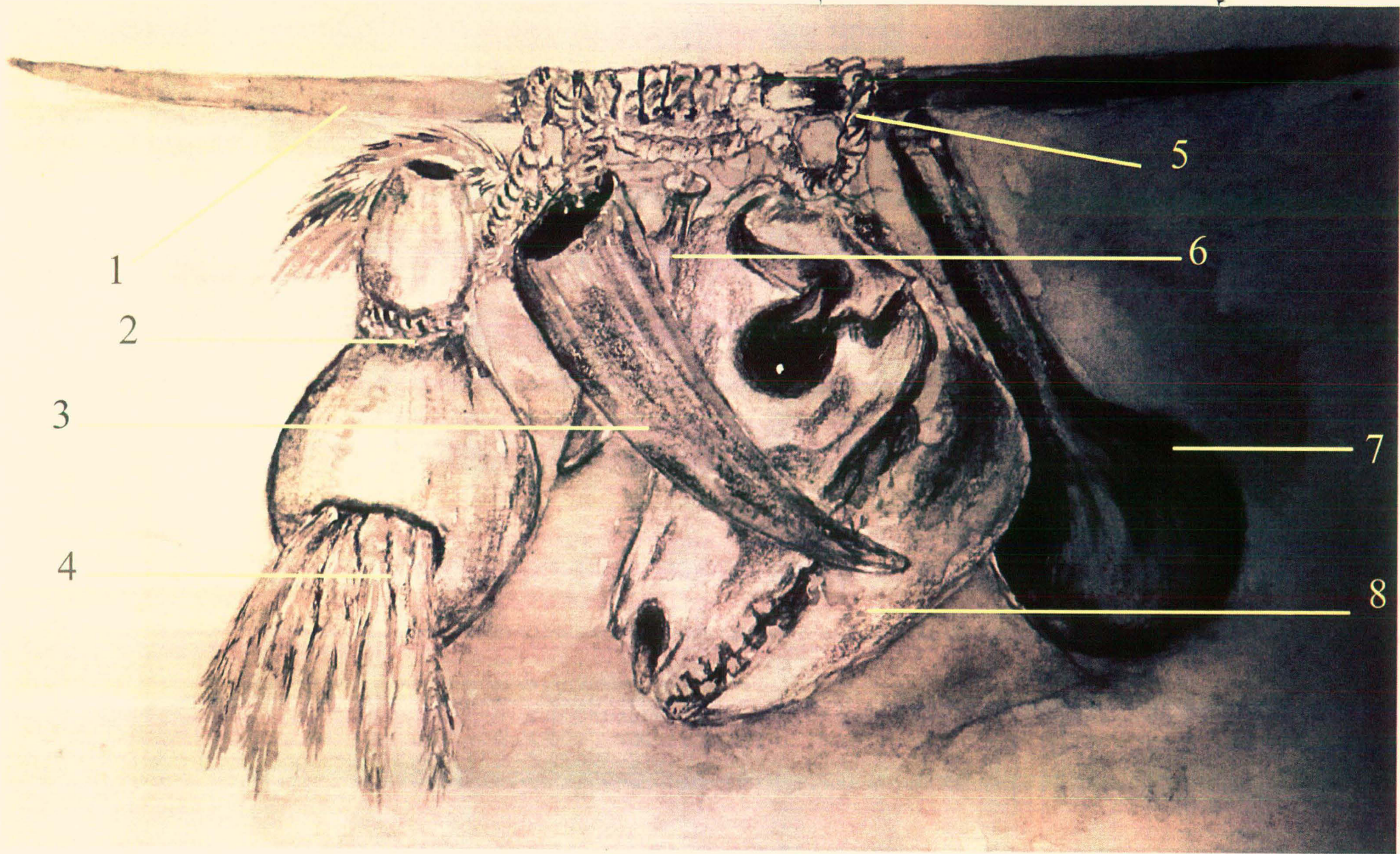


Fig: *Indoi*

1. A BAMBOO SPIKE – TO CONFER VITALITY AND STRONG GROWTH
2. A GOURD – TO CONFER PROSPERITY AND PERFECTION
3. A GOAT'S HORN-TO CONFER BEAUTY AND VIGOUR
4. PADDY PLANTS – TO CONFER BOUNTIFUL HARVEST
5. A CORD FIBRE MADE OF A PLANT CALLED *KHAOPI* – THE OWNER OF THE HOUSE AND ALL THAT RESIDES IN IT REMAINS STRONG AGAINST ALL ADVERSITY
6. A SMALL BAMBOO SPEAR-HEAD – TO WARD OFF MISFORTUNE, DISEASE AND GHOSTS
7. A MINATURE GOURD LADLE – TO CONFER PLENTY IN ALL THAT CAN BE LIFTED IN A LADLE – WATER, WINE (I.E. RICE WINE), GRAINS ETC.
8. A PIG'S SKULL – TO CONFER VIGOUR AND FERTILITY

SOURCE: WILLIAM SHAW'S 'NOTES ON THE THADOU KUKIS' (1929)

of fear (Gangte, 2010, p. 30).⁵⁰

3. *Kulsamnu* is a female spirit, which attacks on the souls of the death person and tries to possess it. The Thadou-Kukis in the past believe that after death, the spirits of men and women, great and small go to *mi-thi-kho* (the abode of the dead). *Kulsamnu* sits on the roadside and seizes all wandering souls except those who had slain men and beasts or had given feasts in their lifetime (Shakespeare, 1975, p. 199).

4. *Chomnu* is another female spirit but it rarely causes any trouble to humankind. It is considered to be a harmless spirit (Singsit, 2010, p. 97).

5. *Gamlahlen* and *Gamkao* are spirits of the jungle which causes serious sickness to person whom they meet (Gangte, 2010, p. 31).

6. *Kaomei* is another spirit, which flies at night like a firefly (Singsit, 2010, p. 97).

7. "*Kaosie* is a greedy spirit. It can enter in a person and convert such person into a different personality, changing the voice, the behaviour and the strength. Such spirit can be released only when it is appeased with what it wants (Gangte, 2010, p. 31)."

8. *Lhangnel* is another dreaded supernatural. *Lhangnel* is said to be capable of transforming itself to various animals such as big serpent, a small snake, wild coke, elk etc (Chongloi, 2008, p. 139). People prohibit and fear to utter the name near river or lake (ibid).

The Church as an institution has replaced the functions of many traditional institutions in the society. Contrary or parallel to the type of church that the missionaries envisaged, churches usually either challenged existing norms or contextualised itself to adjust to the patterns of the social structure. Though the colonial rulers have left the place for good, the church is an institution that is the remnant of the impact made by them. It has become a strong political force in

⁵⁰ For Shakespeare, *Zomi* or *Joumi* is a sight of which is a sure forerunner of some dire misfortune, and this could only be averted by the immediate sacrifice of dog (Shakespeare, 1975, p. 199).

the society as religion is not only a part of culture but also has an autonomous power to influence most elements of cultural complex. For example, in of Manipur, the tribals in the hills who profess Christianity have a comparatively different culture and lifestyle in contrast to the *Vaishnavite* population in the plains (Sitlhou, 2006, p. 16). Religious differences resulted in a sharp contrast in the cultural topography. It removed the traditional institutions like priesthood, the belief systems like '*indoi*'⁵¹, primeval religion and plays an important role in village administrations. In the past, the chief would banish any of his villagers at the slightest acts of disobedience. Nowadays, it is 'ex-communication from the Church' that the people feared more than 'banishment from village.'⁵²

The first missionizing agencies in the north west of Manipur were the Baptist mission led by William Pettigrew (Zeliang, 2005). So, the church structure of the villages that falls within the north west of Manipur, including the Senapati district in which lies my field area, is highly influenced by the Baptist church model. The organisational structure within an average church comprised of a men's wing, a women's wing, youth wing and the children Sunday school department. Whereas, the men's department have higher authority with regard to the administration of the church as a whole, the women's department is usually supportive branches, which aid the men's wing and involved in the social welfare activities of the church and the society. There is the children department, which teaches children on basics of Christian living based on the stories from the bible. The youth department belongs to the unmarried youths in the church.⁵³

⁵¹ *Indoi* is the symbolism that affirms the ever presence of Pathen (God) at all times. A slanted mother pig skull, a piece of a he-goat's curved horn, bracelet, dao, a jar made from gourd, etc., are the various components that constitute an *Indoi*. (Chongloi, 2008, p. 5)

⁵² Singsit, Douthang, Keithelmanbi Village (Senapati District, Manipur), interviewed on 5th september, 2006 (during my pilot survey)

⁵³ Based on my observation of the churches in Tujang Vaichong (Kuki Baptist Convention), Motbung (Motbung Baptist Church) and Kangpokpi (Kangpokpi Centre Church)

The first Kuki church was built in 1916 in Tujang vaichong village (Lolly, 1985, p. 39). Until date, the Kuki Baptist Convention is the only Church in the village.⁵⁴ Church planting then gradually spread to other Kuki villages in Manipur. The Motbung Baptist Church or the Thadou Baptist Church, the main church in Motbung was established on 1st January 1944. Motbung had only about four different churches, which was quite surprising for a big village. They were Motbung Baptist Church, Biblical Baptist Church, Immanuel Baptist Church, Gospel light Baptist Church, Judaism with MBC having the greater population. Perhaps the fact that it is the oldest church and the chief is a member to it contributed to its growth.⁵⁵ The church plays an important role in the society too⁵⁶. Kangpokpi has about 17 churches in all.⁵⁷ Kangpokpi Christian Church was taken as a sample to represent all other churches.

⁵⁴ Based on field observation

⁵⁵ All the church other than Judaism follows the Baptist doctrine so it is surprising as to why it is divided.

⁵⁶ The chief had a mastermind plan to bring all the church under one umbrella for further unification of its people. A divided church he thought would affect the unity of the people.

⁵⁷ Record of the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, 2008

CHAPTER 2

Social Ecology

2.1 Introduction

Rev. M. Barbe best describes the Kukis' affinity to land in 1845, where he writes:

I admired the idea of the Kookies, who believe that the greatest happiness of man after his death consists in being placed on the summit of the highest hill to enjoy the pleasure of seeing the beauties of nature. The existence of a Supreme Being who is to give a spiritual reward being above their conception, how can they imagine a greater happiness than the view of the most beautiful scenery (Barbe, 1845, pp. 381-382)?

Humans everywhere surrounds their mother earth, the land which feeds them and the environment which gives them shelter and protection, with beliefs and ideas. They as a rule surround it with a mythical and historical tradition and define their relation to land in more or less precise legal statements. At the same time they use the land and appropriate, distribute and consume the produce from it (Malinowski, 1945, p. 129). The chapter will study how the Thadou-Kukis weave around their soil with traditional legends, beliefs system, and mystical values and transforms the soil from a merely physical into a culturally determined object. It attempts to explore the relationship between some aspects of ecology¹ or ecological infrastructure—land, pattern of land utilisation, forests, symbolism of land, certain agricultural practices, and some aspects of social structure—social institutions and practices like chieftainship system, priesthood,

¹ The term oekologie (ecology) was coined in 1866 by the German biologist, Ernst Haeckel from the Greek oikos meaning "house" or "dwelling," and logos meaning "science" or "study." Thus, ecology is the "study of the household of nature." Haeckel intended it to encompass the study of an animal in relation to both the physical environment and other plants and animals with which it interacted (Who coined the term "ecology"? http://www.answerbag.com/q_view/41808. accessed date 19th May, 2011).

rituals and traditional forestry management. Therefore, the focus is on the influence of the ecological relations on the political and other institutions as also how the social structure in turn influences the conceptualisation of the ecological relations. It will focus on the man-land relationship in the pre-colonial times and the changes brought forth by colonialism.

2. 2 *Primal Religions of the Thadou-Kukis*

The primeval religion of the Thadou-Kukis reflected their worldview. To the 'Thadous', their world was full of play and counter play of mystic powers which supposedly influenced the shape and destiny of man. When they failed to understand natural calamities and events, they tried to attribute the cause of problems to some unknown and unseen forces. They resorted to every means possible to understand reality as it appeared to them at that particular point of time. Magic and magical rites in its totality are traditional facts. For an action to be magical it needs to be repeated and the whole community needs to believe in its efficacy. Moreover, the ritual needs to be transmissible and is sanctioned by public opinion (Mauss, 1972, pp. 18-19).

The Thadous from time immemorial had traditional method of controlling supernatural powers or to subordinate them through certain actions or occultism or esoteric practices, rites, rituals and ceremonies or celebrations in accompaniment with offerings, prayers or sacrifices so as to appease, placate or propitiate in order to enjoy a trouble-free life, having no anxiety or tensions.²

² Goswami recorded in his book, "*Kuki Life and Lore*," the origin of the practice of appeasing demons for fear of them. In the past, the humans were able to see the ghosts with the naked eye and so killed them mercilessly. The few who were left approached the Supreme God or '*Chung Pathen*' and reported to them about the massacre of their kind. God gave them some leaves substance with a black round spot in the middle. He asked them to go back to their village and put a few of them on the tall tree near the main entrance to the village of the human beings. The devils on the tree were asked to sprinkle the magical leaven particles on all the human beings passing below the tree. From that time onwards, the human beings were incapable of seeing them. It so happened that the eyes of the dog, which accompanied the human, was not struck by the leaven particles. Till today, it is believed that dogs can see the devils and that the eye-balls of

This in course of time, gradually take the shape of an institutionalised systems of beliefs, rituals, rules, procedures, etc., through cults or systematised celebrated rituals or manifestations. With the passage of time, these are handed down from generation to generation and are entrenched into the thickly woven fabric of culture (Gangte, 2010).

The belief in the existence of one Supreme Being, who is the creator and sustainers of all, is central in the primal Kuki religion. This Being is addressed as *Pathen* (Holy Father) or *Chung Pathen* (Holy Father of above). *Chung* means 'above', and therefore, is an attribute of *Pathen*, rather than part of the name, denoting the abode of *Pathen*, which presumably is located high up in the sky (Chongloi, 2008, p. 134). *Pathen* is the central focus of people' religiosity (ibid).

William Shaw wrote in 1929 on the rites and beliefs of the Thadou-Kukis based on his seven years of residence as sub-divisional officer of the north-west area of Manipur state. He wrote:

The Thadous believe that life is given to everything by Pathen (supreme god) who rules the universe. He has the power to subdue the evil influences of the thilhas (ghosts) and it is to him that they performed sacrifices in order to regain health or escape any adversities. He is supposed to have made the heavens and earth and is all-powerful. To the Thadou, the world is the land they live in and the surrounding country, for the peoples of which they have names, and there it ends. No explanation of rain exists beyond stating that it rains just when Pathen pleases. They explain thunder and lightning as an exhibition of the powers and anger of Pathen, who visits those with whom he is displeased by striking them with lightning (Shaw, 1929, pp. 71-72).

the human beings became black because of this. When they became invisible, they started harassing the human beings who could no longer see them. To protect themselves from the mischievous actions of the devils, the human beings began to appease them with offerings and rituals. We see the hierarchy in the kind of gods that are worshipped. Pathen was believed to be superior over the malignant spirits who equally revere Him (Goswami, 1985, p. 312).

Lieut. R. Stewart wrote in 1855, the new Kookies (Thadous) have a much more defined notion of religion than any of the other tribes on Chachar (Cachar).

They (the Kukis) recognize one all powerful god, whom they call "Puthen," (Pathen) as the author of the universe, and although they consider him to be actuated by the human passions, yet they look upon him as a benevolent deity who has at heart the welfare and enjoyment of his creatures. He is the judge likewise of all the mortals, and awards punishments to the wicked both in the world and the next, by inflicting death or disease. In all circumstances of affliction, his name is called upon and sacrifices of animals are made to him, imploring the cessation of his own anger, or the averting of the effects of that of other deities.³ Puthen (Pathen) has got a consort, a goddess of the name of "Nongjai" who has likewise the power to inflict and remove diseases; her name is generally taken in conjunction with that of Puthen (Pathen), and in cases of great urgency she is implored to influence Puthen (Pathen) in behalf of the petitioner. Puthen (Pathen) and Nongjai have a son called Thila, who acts under his father, and has power to inflict diseases on those who displease him. He is considered a harsh and vindictive god, though not entirely malignant. His anger is averted by prayers and sacrifices made either directly to him or to his father (Stewart, 1855, pp. 628-629).

Thila has a termagant of a wife called "Ghumnoo" who is also possessed of the power, and makes it flat in the shape of slight distempers such as headaches, toothaches, &c. She is described as being most jealous of her husband, and of her own position, resenting all omissions of her name in prayers offered up to her spouse. "Ghumoishe" (Gamhoise) is the deity or demon who exercises the most baneful effects upon mortals. Death is supposed to be induced by his apparition and diseases of the worst description are caused by anger, which is supposed to arise from natural bad temper and cruel disposition and not to answer the ends of

³ Turner distinguished four components in Ndembu religion which is strikingly similar to that of the Thadou Society:-- (1) a belief in the existence of a high god (Nzambi) who has created the world but does not interfere with worldly human activities (this god is largely absent from Ndembu ritual and prayer); (2) a belief in the existence of ancestor spirits or "shades" who may afflict the Ndembu (their importance is manifested by the numerous performances of rituals of affliction among the Ndembu); (3) a belief in the intrinsic efficacy of certain animal and vegetable substances; and (4) a belief in the destructive power of female witches and male sorcerers. (Deflem, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 30(1):1-25,1991)

justice. By some he is said to be an illegitimate son of Puthen's (Pathen's), but others deny the relationship, and say, he has no connexion with the gods whatsoever. Ghumoishe (Gamhoise) is married to Khuchom, a malignant goddess who has special power over diseases of the stomach, and these two are the terror of the Kookies; prayers are never offered to them, but sacrifices are made to appease their wrath, and Puthen (Pathen) is likewise called upon to avert it. Hilo is the daughter of this couple and the goddess of the poisons, having power to make all eatables disagree with those who have offended her; she is also appeased by sacrifices or her influence is counteracted by prayers to Puthen (Pathen) (Stewart, 1855, p. 629).

It must be noted that the Thadous attempt to propitiate evils, whereas ask God for deliverance from evil. *Pathen* is considered as creator, father, judge, so forth, and has a general correspondence to the Christian's understanding of God. Some of the common spirits known to the Thadou-Kukis are:--

1. *Gamhoise* means evil spirit of the jungle and his wife *Inmunse* means evil spirit of the house (Shakespeare, 1975, p. 199). Together it means 'accursed place' by a combination of the two words. They are souls of the persons meeting unnatural death or *thi-se* (Gangte, 2010, p.30). They are supposed to inhabit the densest forests on the highest mountain tops, and when passing through such their dread names are never mentioned (Shakespeare, 1975, p. 199).

2. *Joumi* is a spirit, which is said to be as tall as trees. *Jou* denotes 'a densely forested region', and *mi* means 'human' or 'dweller' (Chongloi, 2008, p. 139). They are reportedly very fond of chicken and kill them by throttling the neck and sucking its blood. The mere sight of them is enough to make people die out of fear (Gangte, 2010, p. 30).⁴

3. *Kulsamnu* is a female spirit, which attacks on the souls of the death person and tries to possess it. The Thadou-Kukis in the past believe that after death, the

⁴ For Shakespeare, *Zomi* or *Joumi* is a sight of which is a sure forerunner of some dire misfortune, and this could only be averted by the immediate sacrifice of dog (Shakespeare, 1975, p. 199).

spirits of men and women, great and small go to *mi-thi-kho* (the abode of the dead). *Kulsamnu* sits on the roadside and seizes all wandering souls except those who had slain men and beasts or had given feasts in their lifetime (Shakespeare, 1975, p. 199).

4. *Chomnu* is another female spirit but it rarely causes any trouble to humankind. It is considered to be a harmless spirit (Singsit, 2010, p. 97).

5. *Gamlahlen* and *Gamkao* are spirits of the jungle which causes serious sickness to person whom they meet (Gangte, 2010, p. 31).

6. *Kaomei* is another spirit, which flies at night like a firefly (Singsit, 2010, p. 97).

7. "*Kaosie* is a greedy spirit. It can enter in a person and convert such person into a different personality, changing the voice, the behaviour and the strength. Such spirit can be released only when it is appeased with what it wants (Gangte, 2010, p. 31)."

8. *Lhangnel* is another dreaded supernatural. *Lhangnel* is said to be capable of transforming itself to various animals such as big serpent, a small snake, wild cock, elk etc (Chongloi, 2008, p. 139). People prohibit and fear to utter the name near river or lake (ibid).

In 1882, Horatio Bickerstaffe Rowney wrote in the book, "*The Wild Tribes of India*" that the wilder Kookies (Kukis) believe in spirits having charge of their forests, hills, and rivers (Rowney, (1882) 1974, p. 187). The idea of Paradise for the Kukis represents a happy hunting-ground, where rice grows spontaneously, and game abounds as the heritage of the man who has killed the largest number of his enemies in life, the people killed by him attending on him as his slaves (ibid).

According to the Kuki creation myth, the face of the earth is stated to have been covered with one vast sea, inhabited by a gigantic worm (Soppitt, 1976, p. 26). One day, the creator passed by the worm and dropped a small piece of earth and

said, “Of this I mean to make a land and people (in) it”. The worm replied, “What! You think to make a habitable land of a small piece like this: why, it’s absurd: look here, I can swallow it! Saying this, he swallowed the lump (ibid)”. The legend says that to the astonishment of the worm, the lump passed out of his body and increase in size until it becomes the world we now see. Subsequently, men sprang out of the earth by the will of the gods (ibid). The myth reflects the ideology that the land is the manifestation of God on earth as it creates, recreates and nurtures (ibid).

2. 3 Land and Culture Relationship

2.3.1 Ecological Sensibilities of Local Communities

The seasonal variations and distinctive action patterns for survival has contributed to the Thadou-Kukis understanding about themselves. Their relationship to nature is best understood in the way they conceptualised their natural environment which inturn reflects their understanding of it.

a. Naming of the Month

The Thadou-Kukis evolve naming of 12 months according to changes in nature and positions of the moons in the sky. The divisions into days, weeks, months, years, etc., correspond to the periodical recurrence of rites, feasts and public ceremonies. A calendar expresses the rhythms of the collective activities, while at the same time its function is to assume their regularity (Durkheim, 1915, p. 10-11).

Sl. no.	Months	With English equivalence
1.	<i>Tolbol</i> --There is much dust due to dry season. ' <i>Tol</i> ' means ground and ' <i>bol</i> ' means dusty.	January
2.	<i>Bulte</i> or ' <i>Bul</i> ' is a fruit-bearing tree. It is the time when jungles are slashed for jhum cultivation.	February
3.	<i>Lhakao</i> -- A small insect called ' <i>Kao-Jang</i> ' comes out in large numbers during this month. It enters even in people's clothes, creating great discomfort in wearing when people spend their days and nights in the field huts called ' <i>Lou-buh</i> '. This is the time when the trees that have been slashed down are dried.	March
4.	<i>Lhatun</i> ---It is time for sowing seeds in the field. ' <i>Tun</i> ' means 'to sow.' It is April when a kind of bird which chirps as ' <i>Muchi-tun-tun</i> ' indicating that sowing seed should commence, people start sowing seeds.	April
5.	<i>Lhapul</i> or ' <i>Phul</i> ' stands for 'sprout' and ' <i>lha</i> ' means month. It is the time when herbs, trees and all other greenery sprout and germinate.	May
6.	<i>Lha-dou</i> --This is the time when bamboo shoot grows in plenty. Also a special kind of wild turmeric called ' <i>Aidou</i> ' blooms in great number. It is also a time when people go to work enduring all hardships including the rain. Such endurance and bearing of hardship is called ' <i>dou</i> .'	June

7.	<i>Lha-Mul--</i> This is the time when the grass grows in plenty. The ground becomes woolly which is called ' <i>mul</i> ' with such growth.	July
8.	<i>Lhajing--</i> This is the time in which all the herbs, grasses and other greeneries grows in height and the thickets darkening the jungle roads. The sky is also always cloudy and moonlight is seldom seen, ' <i>jing</i> ', therefore, stands for darkness. Therefore, nights are darkest during this month.	August
9.	<i>Lhalam--</i> The sky is at its clearest during this month and the clouds of the monsoon season started to recede. Harvesting commences which is called ' <i>chang lam</i> '. The moon lit is bright and the girls can do their stitching work under the moon lit night.	September
10.	<i>El-Lha--</i> Winter sets in and the fine weather give better health to the villagers, which makes them jovial, elated, fun and frolic loving called ' <i>el</i> '. This is considered to be the best time of the year.	October
11.	<i>Phal-lha--</i> This is the time when paddy had been collected after harvesting which is called ' <i>Changphal</i> '. This is the gathering time.	November
12.	<i>Awl-Lha--</i> People take rest from their hard labour and all year long toiling in this month. ' <i>Awl</i> ' means 'leisure (Thomsong, 2006, p. 23).'	December

The counting of month-days is not based on a certain number of fixed days for a particular month. It is based from new moon to new moon. There are stages of marking the moon as follows: (1) *Lhathah* (New Moon) (2) *Achol-ke* (oval-shaped moon), (3) *Avoni-lu-tai* (like breast-head, almost full moon), (4) *Alihtai* (full moon), (5) *Aheh suh tai* (waning commences), (6) *Avom-lu-tai* (waning 1st stage),

(7) *Acholketai* (half waning) and (8) *Nisa-to-killhon-tai* (goes along with the sun) (Gangte, 2010, p. 36).

As regards naming of the weekdays, the Kukis do not have them in conventional form. However, after becoming Christians, the pioneering Christian among the Kukis, Ngulhao Thomsong, in his Thadou primary book published in 1927 gave the names based on Biblical creation week as given below (Thomsong, 2006, p. 22). They are:

Sl. No	In Thadou	English Equivalence
1.	<i>Sempatni</i> (beginning of creation day)	Monday
2.	<i>Leisemni</i> (creation day of the earth)	Tuesday
3.	<i>Vahchanni</i> (day of award of light)	Wednesday
4.	<i>Vanghomni</i> (day of distribution of blessings)	Thursday
5.	<i>Gansemni</i> (creation day of birds and animals)	Friday
6.	<i>Misemni</i> (creation day of man)	Saturday
7.	<i>Pathenni</i> (a day set aside to venerate God)	Sunday ⁵

2. 4 Human-Nature Relationships

Levi-Strauss in using the binary opposition of nature and culture to explain kinship system emphasized that human possesses a cultural heritage of norms

⁵ The book of Genesis in the Bible says that on the Seventh day, God finished His work of creation and He rested on that day (Genesis 2:1-3).

and values that separates their behaviour and societal organization from that of the animal species. Only a negligible trace of the universal cultural model, that is, language, tools, social institutions and systemized aesthetic, moral, or religious values can be found to be practiced among the superior mammals. Thus, the absence of norms or rules seems to provide the surest criterion for distinguishing a natural from a cultural process (Levi-Strauss, 1970). In all the history of the land tenure system in human communities, a need was always felt as regards the conformity of linkage between man and land. Thus, there was a trend in the traditional communities to make some positive arrangements to support it by magico-religious sanctions (Sarkar, 2006, p. 5).

Land is the part of the Mother Earth, which in the understanding of the people is something they have inherited from their remote ancestors. Thus, it is to be regarded as a sacred soil with which the descendents are connected through spiritual significance. The Orsons, a successful settled cultivating tribe of Chhotanagpur, considers the bond between land and man is not to be evaluated in the materialistic background, rather, it is processed by moral obligations and ritualistic contemplation. Since the land is inherited by them from their ancestors, so it must be protected with considerable reverence and due solemnity (Sarkar, 2006, pp. 5-6). The Kuttia Konds of central India use to practice the savage *Meriah* Sacrifices of human beings who were offered to the earth Goddess in order to fertilize the soil (Elwin, 1964, p. 178).

The Polynesian Society in Tikopia has a feeling for the permanency of land as opposed to the fleeting presence of man who draws sustenance from it (Firth, 1957, p. 374). Firth wrote:

If two people fight over the possession of an orchard, the chief may send a message to them, 'Do not go and fight. Each man go and plant food for himself. The land is laughing at us.' As it is said, 'the land stands, but man dies; he weakens and is buried down below. We dwell for but a little while, but the land

stands in its abiding-place.' In other words, 'how futile are the struggles of men compared with the permanency of the soil' (Firth, 1957, p. 374).

Cases such as this are not lone examples; rather they are universal occurrences in the tribal domain in respect of this type of conceptual idea on land and ancestor philosophy (Sarkar, 2006, p. 6).

2.4.1 The Priesthood or '*Thempu*' System

Edmund R. Leach referred Malinowski, as an anthropologist who recognises that magic far from being an exemplification of primitive superstition and ignorance, is a social mechanism through which the "magician" asserts his status and exercises control over the actions of others (as documented in Malinowski, 1966, p. viii). Likewise, one institution or office that plays an important role in traditional Thadou-Kuki society in mediating between nature and human relationship is the institution of priesthood. Lieut R. Stewart wrote in 1855 about the '*Thempu System*', amongst the Kukis of North Cachar, which now comes under the state of Assam. The '*Priest*' or '*Thempoo*' or '*Mithoi*' consecrated the duty of identifying the angry god who had inflicted diseases on a person. They underwent an initiatory education, before they are admitted into the order. They are supposed to have occult knowledge which enables them the privilege of bargaining with the gods, and divining the cause of wrath and the means of propitiation (Stewart, 1855, p. 630). The *Thempoo*s (*Thempus*) themselves are very jealous of their secret and they have among themselves a language, most probably an entirely artificial one, quite different from that spoken by the people and perfectly unintelligible to them (ibid).

There has been debate on the nature of office of the priest in the Thadou society. While colonial writers like C.A. Soppitt in 1893 and Lieut. R. Stewart in 1855 termed it to be non-hereditary, native writers like T.S. Gangte (1993, 2010) considers it hereditary. The post could have evolved into a hereditary

membership, besides there is the rationality that it is to his own sons that the priest is likely to pass down the secrets of his crafts.

The priest chants esoteric words which express gratitude and promises for future, prayer for protection. This is done in his own broken doggerel language known as '*phuisam*' with magic words called '*doithu*', believed to carry magical potentialities that is supposed to have tremendous impact on the spirits (Gangte, 2010, p. 12). He is deemed as the only individual who could communicate with the supernatural elements in the form of sorcery or magic and thus mediate on behalf of human beings (ibid, p. 32). Max Weber explanation of the important role of the priest and magician in a society is relevant to the Thadou-Kukis. He wrote that the priest and magicians lays claim to authority by virtue of his service in a sacred tradition (Weber, 1978, p. 440). He further noted that without prior consultation with the magician, it was not possible for any innovations in social relations to be newly adopted in primitive times (ibid).

Being a patriarchal society, the priestly position was held mainly by the male members of the society. However, T.Kipgen has recorded a few examples of women who have held priestly office out of necessity. They are unofficial priestesses or sorcerers. They performed when there is no male representative to perform the ritual.⁶ Rev. Seikholet Singson, the first ordained minister among the Thadou-Kuki Christians said that usually the priest taught his skills to his son. However, incantations or '*doithu*' was not permitted to be instructed in isolation. The condition required that his sister or mother accompanied the son.

⁶ T. Kipgen (2004) recorded the following cases of Thadou-Kuki women who acted as priest in their respective villages – (1) Mrs. Lamkhoneng Changsan in Taizawl village, N.C. Hills, Assam
(2) Mrs. Vahsi SITHOU of Ponlen village, Sadar Hills, Manipur
(3) Mrs. Vahhoi of Karakhun village, Sadar Hills, Manipur
(4) Mrs. Deikho of Gampal village, Ukhru District, Manipur

Therefore, there was a possibility for women to learn the art though it was not the intention of the priest to impart the knowledge to them.⁷

In every traditional Thadou-Kuki village administration, every village has a *Kho Thempu* (village priest). The priest is counted as one of the council of ministers who assists the chief in his administration (Kipgen, 2004, p. 73). Therefore, he is a highly esteemed figure in the social structure. He is sometimes made a 'mediator' in terms of conflicts in lieu of his social image derived from the sacred character of priesthood.⁸ Therefore, in the Thadou-Kuki society, priesthood can be regarded as religious agency having political significance, as both a political institution functioning within a set of religious ideas and values or as a religious institution functioning within a set of political ideas and values. Their office is a politico-religious institution of the traditional social order. Though their religious function has an important political role, left to itself, they have no political, administrative or judicial office.

Stewart explains how the system of priest hood works by narrating a case of the priest in his role:

An individual of a village, being stricken with disease, goes to or calls for the Thempoo (Thempu), who feels his pulse, and questions him as to the spot on which he first felt himself affected, and on other matters regarding the nature of his recent occupations. Having meditated for a short time on the replies, he at length names the god who has been offended, and mentions the kind of sacrifice, which will appease him, particularising the colour of the animal that is required (Stewart, 1855, 630-631).

He also functions through oneirology, which he gets while sleeping (Gangte, 2010, p. 32) or resting.⁹ This is akin to the theory of 'animism' in E.B. Taylor's book 'Primitive Culture'. Taylor's book also talked about dreams as spaces in

⁷ Rev. Seikholet Singson, Interviewed on 30th April 2003, Bongmoul Village, Manipur, as documented by T.Kipgen (2004)

⁸ Kilong, Helthang, Motbung Village, Interviewed on 14th of October, 2008

⁹ Kilong, Helthang, Motbung Village, Interviewed on 14th of October, 2008

which the spirit visit a person in sleep. The primitive man believed in a spiritual self, which was separable from his bodily self and thus, could lead an independent existence (Taylor, 1871).

The village priest or *Thempu* acts as a mediator between the sick person and the offended god. He performs the necessary ritual that is required to cure the sick person. *Khosung Thempu* or village priest is also the Medicine man of the village.¹⁰ Literally speaking, he is the counsellor-in-charge of the public health in within the village (Gangte, 1993, p. 131). The Thadous' besides believing in a supreme God also believe that there are smaller gods living and ruling in the world who are capable of harming or helping them. The sickness of a person is attributed to an encounter with such spirits, and the sickness is called "*Toh khah nei*." The Thempu can determine whether that sickness is the sickness of "*Gamlah nat*" (sickness induced by the spirits of forests), "*Twilam nat*" (sickness induced by the spirits of water canals), "*Kholailang nat*" (sickness induced by spirits loitering about the village), etc.¹¹ This belief tells us that the Kukis are constantly at risk of being attacked or captured by the smaller gods of the world. The smaller gods that can harm their soul and body needs to be constantly propitiated and appeased by the Village Priest.

Savyasaachi commenting on the Onges of Andaman Islands suggests that, rituals enable a social discourse between humans and spirits. The paths along which they take are different in the normal course of the day and during season otherwise a crossing of their paths causes' illness. The spirits are, 'beings' without a tangible body and it is difficult for the human eye to know their paths.

¹⁰ The Thempu is expected to treat all the villagers free of cost. In return, he is allowed to take his share from the tributes of grains the villagers give to the village chief.

¹¹ Lhovum, Kailal, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, Interviewed on 12th Oct, 2008

Therefore, to ensure that their paths do not cross, magical substances are used (Savyasaachi, in Visvanathan (ed.), 2001, p. 87).

E.E. Evans-Pritchard has studied the Spirit and man relationships amongst the Nuer, a cattle-herding people dwelling in Sudan. Similar to the Thadous, amongst the Nuer, the priest acts as intermediary between men and God, the virtue, which gives efficacy to his mediation, resides in his office rather than in himself (Evans-Pritchard, 1962, p. 299). The virtue derives from the office is believed to be established by God at the commencement of things in the social order. Consequently, the priest is a 'traditional public functionary' considered as a representative of mankind, rather than of any particular individual, to God in certain critical situations (ibid). Therefore, when he appeals to God at sacrifice he does so in phrases and this action recalls the universal and enduring character of his role (ibid).

However, unlike the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard, 1962), who are more involved in 'cattle husbandry' and 'fishing', the Thadou-Kukis in the past and the present are highly agricultural community. Therefore, we find most of the role played by the priest revolving around land in its varied form. The following chapter will mainly focus on the priestly function in relation to land rituals. C.A. Soppitt wrote:

The principal duty of the priest is in offering sacrifices to the deities, appeasing the evil-inclined ones on the occasions of sickness, and propitiating the well-disposed at the time of rice-planting, &c (Soppitt, 1976, p. 18).

Shaw recorded the inevitable role played by the Thadou-Kuki priests in dealing with sickness, using virgin land either for cultivation or for building a village, life cycle rituals like marriage, birth and death, activities like hunting, wars, cultivation and in trials (Shaw, 1929).

2. 4. 2 The Chieftainship or 'Haosa' System

In Thadou-Kuki village that are still under chieftainship system, the allocation of Jhum land, site for settlement within the village, access to forest area¹² and the regulation of the use of rocks, water, soil, woods, grass and other Non Timber Forest Products are done by the chief assisted by the council of ministers. This is where village institution of governance plays an important role in regulating and mediating between man and nature.

Traditionally, as per the custom of the Thadou-Kukis, the *Haosa* has absolute power over the village land and it is his duty to distribute the cultivable land to all the villagers at the beginning of every year. In doing so, he has to consult his council of ministers called '*Semang-Pachong*' nominated by him from different clans of the village. It is obligatory for any hunter to offer to the *hausa* the head and the right hind-leg of any eatable animal killed by the hunter. The villagers are obligated to give the chief a basketful of grains of rice called '*chang-seu*' at the end of the year (Devi, 2006, p. 52). This is done as an act of acknowledgment of the chief as an overseer of all the lands and all the produce that comes of it. *Chang-Seu* is not practiced anymore in some villages like the case of Tujang Vaichong of Sadar Hills Sub-division of Senapati District of Manipur.¹³ However, it is still prevalent, though sometimes taking monetary shape of payment in the case of Motbung village of Sadar Hills Sub-division of Senapati District of Manipur.¹⁴ Therefore, it differs from village to village as to how much and which parts of the customs and traditions of the Thadou-Kukis is retain in the present scenario.

¹² The forests in the villages are clearly shared between the villagers and the forest department. The villagers with the permission of the chief can access the forest, which does not fall within the ambit of the 'reserve area' marked out by Forest department of the government of India.

¹³ Kipgen, Konkhochong, Acting Chief (on behalf of her son) of Tujang Vaichong village, interviewed on 9th November, 2008

¹⁴ Kaikhosei, S.L., Chief of Motbung Village, interviewed on 13th October, 2008

New settlers in order to get homestead land have to get the permission of the chief through the traditional serving of 'ju' or rice-beer to the chief. With the advent of Christianity, this has been replaced by 'cha-omna' or serving of tea. Gifts like cocks, shawls or vegetables could be given alongside at this time of negotiation. The land allotted to the villagers cannot be sold. If a family in the village wishes to migrate to another village, the land will automatically be return to the chief. The member of the chief's council with the approval of the chief superintend and transact all business matters in connection with the land—cultivation, measurement, collection of tax, etc. when a particular land is to be cultivated for Jhumming purposes by a villager, it has to be brought into the knowledge of the chiefs for approval.¹⁵

According to Priyadarshini M. Gangte, 'Haosa' system is indeed very similar to the Social Contract Theory of Rousseau who enunciates that rights imply duties. By this system, both the villagers on the one hand and the *Haosa* as the chief on the other are duty bound to fulfil their rights and obligations towards each other. Gangte continued that writers who have superficial knowledge about the *Haosa* systems try to draw a similarity between the *Haosa* and the *Zamindar* and often jump to a conclusion that the system of a 'Haosa' is despotic (Gangte, 2008).¹⁶

The second obligatory function of the chief as a leader is at the time of the performance of rituals. Malinowski's studies of the Pacific society revealed that there was a strong organic unity between political and religious power, that the chief acted as rainmaker and master of fertility, and that there was a strong nexus between chieftainship and ancestor worship (ibid). The chieftainship system is a ritual and moral structure, which epitomizes the unity of the Thadou society. The chief officiates at all the major rituals in the village alongside the priest.

¹⁵ Kipgen, Konkhochong, Acting Chief (on behalf of her son) of Tujang Vaichong village, interviewed on 9th November, 2008

¹⁶ Citing on Jean Jacqueu Rousseau: *The Social Contract: 1712-1778*

¹⁶ Citing on Jean Jacqueu Rousseau: *The Social Contract: 1712-1778*

In the 1970's, Kate Millet in her 'Sexual Politics' (1971) introduced a new way of using patriarchy. Derived from the Greek patriarchs, meaning '*head of the tribe*', the term was central to seventeenth century debates over the extent of monarchical power. Supporters of absolute rule claimed that the power of a king over his people was the same as that of a father over his family, and that God and Nature sanctioned both the forms of power (Bryson, 2003, p. 166). Similarly, the chiefs in the Kuki society were revered like a god. Lieut. R. Stewart wrote:

All these rajahs are supposed to have sprung from the same stock, which it is believed originally had connexion with the gods themselves, their persons are therefore, looked upon with the greatest respect and almost superstitious veneration, and their commands are in every case law (Stewart, 1855, p. 625).

Therefore, the dictatorial power of the chieftainship begins with this belief. Even when the society converted to Christianity, the chief has an important position within the church and its administration.¹⁷

2: 5 Land and Rituals

Most of the tribal religious practices like rituals, ceremonies, festivals and dances are all centred on the soil. Likewise, the Thadou-Kukis of the Kuki society in the past, and to some extent today, performed several ceremonies such as purification of forest at the beginning of jungle ceremony, purification of soil after slashing and burning down the forest, dedication of seed just before sowing seeds and during the weeding season, thanksgiving or the harvest festival. Therefore, each stage in the agricultural calendar has its own accompanying rituals. There is also a ritual for building a new village. Since the tribal depends heavily upon the fertility of the soil, they develop a respect for the earth. They invoke the soil to be kind, fertile and generous as they sow seeds on it. The value of an object is therefore determined by its meaningfulness to social life (Savyasaachi, in Visvanathan (ed.), 2010, p. 85).

¹⁷ My emphasis based on my observation in the villages of Motbung and Tujang Vaichong.

Rituals also lead to identity affirmation as customary practices offer an opportunity to emphasize values, to announce, define, and re-affirm commitment to sacred aspects of customary practices. Affirmation tends to highlight group boundaries. What use do rituals have for collective identity? Durkheim emphasizes the integrative functions that rituals serve for members of societies by revitalising shared sentiments and beliefs. The rites serve to sustain the vitality of [common] beliefs to keep them from being effaced from memory and, in sum, to revive the most essential elements of the collective consciousness. Through it, the group periodically receives the sentiments, which it has of itself and of its unity; at the same time, individuals are strengthened in their social natures (Durkheim, 1965, p. 420).

There is an attempt to revive the past to make it intelligible to the people the origin of the ritual. Sociological theories on religion like Durkheim's (ibid) concept of 'collective conscience,' 'collective representation,' and 'collective effervescence,' have been utilised to look at the land based rituals as a determinate system which has a life of its own though composed of a collective of individual consciousness. Though the intention is to appease the spirits concerned, the collective observance of the rituals have far reaching consequences in playing an integrative function that serve the members of societies by revitalizing shared sentiments and beliefs. The rite serves to sustain the vitality of [common] beliefs to keep them from being effaced from memory and, in sum, to revive the most essential elements of the collective consciousness.

In order to comprehend the local people's understanding of the relationship between man and soil, it is necessary to delve deeply into historical tradition and mythological foundations. We will discuss two rituals—the *lou-mun-vet* or '*daiphu*' ritual and the *Chaang-nunghah* ritual. The thesis attempts to understand the local people's own reason for practising traditional customs and practices contrary to the colonisers or outsiders interpretation. The common understanding of the purpose of ritual and ceremony is rooted not in cultural

identity, but rather in superstitious and spiritual belief. If we delve deeper, the original purpose of a ritual might not only be to frighten away evil spirits, to bring about weather condition favourable to bountiful harvests, or to entreat the gods for a successful hunt or for victory in battle.

Every ritual has three important dimensions –

1. Who leads the ritual?
2. The patterns of participation in the ritual and
3. How the ritual is constructed?

According to Evans-Pritchard, the right intention is the most important characteristic of a ritual. The canon of sacrifice or four acts of sacrificial drama –

1. Presentation, 2. Consecration, 3. Invocation and 4. Immolation

Along with these four, other features may be added such as libations and aspersions and, mostly in sacrifices to spirits, hymn singing, but these are supernumerary acts. These are termed, “the canon of sacrifice” by Evans-Pritchard (Evans-Pritchard, 1962, p. 208).

In the pre-Christian Thadou-Kuki society, the village priest called ‘*Thempu*’ has always led the ritual. The villagers concerned with the ritual or in most cases, the whole villagers participate either as passive observers or according to the requirement. The ritual is constructed at the site selected for cultivation or harvesting in the case of the two rituals discussed. The priest plays a major role in the ritual. He is the only person who knows the incantation necessary for communicating with the spirits and gods.

In terms of his role in the field of land related rituals, the ‘*village thempu*’ (village priest) of the Thadou-Kukis is most similar to the ‘*garden magician*’ of the Trobriand Islanders in New Guinea (Malinowski, 1972, p. 59). Malinowski wrote:

Among the forces and beliefs, which bear upon and regulate garden work, perhaps magic is the most important. It is a department of its own, and the garden magician, next to the chief and the sorcerer, is the most important personage of the village. The position is hereditary, and, in each village, a special system of magic is handed on in the female line from one generation to another. I (Malinowski) have called it a system, because the magician has to perform a series of rites and spells over the garden, which run parallel with the labour, and which, in fact, initiate each stage of work and each new development of the plant life. Even before any gardening is begun at all, the magician has to consecrate the site with a ceremonial performance in which all men of the village take part. This ceremony officially opens the season's gardening, and only after it is performed do the villagers begin to cut the scrub on their plots. Then, in a series of rites, the magician inaugurates successively all the various stages which follow one another – the burning of the scrub, the clearing, the planting, the weeding and the harvesting. Also, in another series of rites and spells, he magically assists the plant in sprouting, in budding, in bursting into leaf, in climbing, in forming the rich garlands of foliage, and in producing the edible tubers (Malinowski, 1972, p. 59).

Thus, the *Thempu* controls both the work of man and the forces of Nature. The magician, in carrying out the rites, sets the pace, compels people to apply themselves to certain tasks, and to accomplish them properly and in time. In the end, however, there is no doubt that by its influence in ordering, systematising and regulating work, magic is economically invaluable for the natives (ibid, p. 60). The chief of the village officially inaugurates the commencing of the ritual. He also, by his mere presence acts directly as supervisor of labour, and sees to it that people do not skimp their work, or lag behind with it.¹⁸ Another institution that plays an important role as the locus of control in the ritual performance is

¹⁸ Lhouvum, Vumpao, Joint Secretary of Motbung Semang-Pachong Village Council, interviewed on 14th October 2008

the '*tucha*' and '*becha*'.¹⁹ They have an important role in almost all the rituals that are performed in the Thadou-Kuki society.

Another important characteristic of rituals is the words in magic called *doithu* and the incantations called *phuisam*.²⁰ In analysing the direct verbal expressions in the magical formulae, we can assume that these modes of thinking must have somehow guided those who shaped them (Malinowski, 1972, p. 428). Each spell shows unmistakable signs of being a collection of linguistic additions from different epochs (ibid). The local people are deeply convinced of the mysterious, intrinsic powers of certain words as these words are believed to have virtue in their own right and have come into existence from primeval times and exercising their influence directly (ibid, p. 451).

In explicit phraseology, the predominant features of spells are –

- 1) Lists of ancestral names
- 2) Invocations of ancestral spirits
- 3) Mythological allusions
- 4) Similes and exaggerations

¹⁹ *Tuchas*' are considered the right-hand men of the ego. They have to do whatever work is there to be performed on behalf of the ego. The *Tucha* is selected amongst the father's sister's family, sister's family or daughter's family. The '*Becha*' may be termed as representative in nature or spokesperson who has been vested with the full power and authority of an ego. A '*becha*' need not be chosen from amongst one relative, but can be chosen amongst one clan members, a close friend or any person with the ability to shoulder the responsibilities required of the title.

²⁰ According to Malinowski, in translating word for word the native text, each expression and formative affixes should be rendered to its English equivalent. There are two main difficulties to overcome in order to render it to free intelligible English. Many of the words found in magic do not belong to ordinary speech, but they are 'archaisms', 'mythical names' and 'strange compounds', formed according to unusual linguistic rules. Thus, the first task is to unveil the obsolete expressions, the mythical references, and to find the present day equivalents of the words. There is also the difficulty in linking these meanings together. This is because magic is not build in a narrative style and does not intent to communicate ideas from one person to another nor contains a consistent meaning. It is an instrument serving special purposes, intended for the exercise of man's specific power over things (Malinowski, 1972, p. 432).

5) Depreciating contrasts between the companions and the reciter—most of them expressing an anticipation of the favourable results aimed at in the spell (ibid, p. 451).

2.5.1 Rituals for Purifying Land

a. The Lou-Mun-Vet and Daiphu Ritual

The Lou-mun-vet Ritual (ritual performed before cultivation): *Lou* means ‘field’ and *boldan* means ‘the method of cultivation’. The word *louboldan* means the method of cultivating one’s field. One person from each household in the village would go out in the jungle to locate a site for cultivation within the area earmarked for that particular year by the village chief and his ministers. (Gangte, 1993, p. 191) Here cultivation is related to the method of Jhum cultivation on the slopes of the hills.²¹ “In the process, each man makes his markings at various places at regular intervals by the side of a tree by cutting a little portion of its trunk. This marking operation is called ‘*Lou Chan.*’ Such sign-marks are much respected as they indicate that the particular portion or portions of land covered by such markings are already in possession of someone (ibid).”

In the Thadou Kuki society, the part of agricultural activity that require brawn like cutting and clearing of the jungle and burning them down is mostly attributed to men. Women predominate in the tasks of the more monotonous nature like planting, weeding, seed selection, winnowing of grains and seed storage etc. However, both men and women equally contribute in the harvesting and threshing of grains.²² The women are logically charged with all the tasks involving the protection of things that grow and shoot or that are green and tender. It is considered the women’s duty to watch over the growth of the young humans and animals. Besides hoeing, the women’s work includes gathering herbs and vegetables in the garden (Bourdieu, 2007).

²¹ Lhouvum, Kailal, Cultural Specialist from Motbung Village, Interviewed on 12th October, 2008

²² The discussion on the social organization of farming is elaborated in chapter 6.

During the month of March, the *Chief* fixes a date for clearing the jungle in the Jhum fields by setting the jungle on fire. During the month of January (*tolbol*), February (*bulte*) and March (*Lhakao*) after the clearing of the jungle, there is a stage '*chap-phou*', in which the cut-down twigs, trees are dried under the sun before it is burn. When the time comes to "slash and burn," the chief takes into consideration the degree of sunlight (*nisat dan*), rain and dew drops frequency.²³

On the appointed date, all the villagers go to the fields and set fire on the jungle. After setting the jungle on fire all come back to the houses. The women of each house would clean and sweep the front courtyards. This is done because of the belief that if the courtyards of the houses in the village are not cleaned and swept well, fire would not burn properly in the jungle of the jhum fields (Goswami, 1985, p. 88). It is customary for all the villagers to remain inside their houses the whole of the next day, that is, after the day in which the forest is put on fire (*ibid*). This tradition of remaining inside the house is called '*Vam-Nit*'.²⁴ '*Vam*' means ashes and '*nit*' means observance. This observance of curfew is done as a symbolic expression of condolences for all the animals and insects that have perished in the jungle fire (*ibid*).

This ritual is associated with the belief, which has passed down through generations that whenever there is fire in the forest, the relatives of the animals, the wild cats (*Sangah*) and ghosts that lives in forest, would come to search for the missing relatives. The touch of these forest spirits was believed to have a hazardous impact on the health of the person, leading to their death most of the time. This is the reason why people are terrified to spend the night after the burning of the jungle. One informant, Satkholal Lhouvum narrates an incident that involved a village priest (*thempu*) from one Buning village who refused to

²³ Lhouvum, Satkholal, Cultural Specialist & aged group of Motbung Village, interviewed on 12th October, 2008

²⁴ Lhouvum, Satkholal, Cultural Specialist & aged group of Motbung Village, interviewed on 12th October, 2008

honour the belief. He died the same night.²⁵ This might be the reason why there is a taboo against sleeping in the field when the ashes are still black and fresh.

They would build a hut in their field for temporary retirement. To ascertain the auspicious time for settlement, they plant onions²⁶ in the field among the ashes. Until and unless there is a sprout in the onion, they do not spend the night in the field. With the first sign of germination, which is referred to as '*loumit asoh tai-e*', it is permissible to sleep in the hut built in the field. Bourdieu records that the Kabylia people of Algeria celebrates the return of spring as the return of life. He wrote, "...life has emerged on the face of the earth, the first shoots are appearing on the trees, it is 'the opening'" (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 101). In order to appease the spirits and relations of the animals that had died in the fire and for the blessings in the form of a rich harvest, a ritual is done through the priest who acts as the mediator between humankind and spirits. Gangte called these forest spirits, '*Gampi Gampa*' (the owner of the jungle) and used the word, 'demon' to define them (Gangte, 1993, p. 192). The priest chooses someone from the village as his helper. They will start from the field that lies at the farthest most end, this will continue for two days until they finish performing in all the field of each villagers.

Each cultivator collects the following articles (Goswami, 1985, p. 88):--

1. An egg of a hen
2. Leaves of the shrub called '*daikham*'. Leaves of the shrub called '*loudai*'.
3. Nine small and one big bead of clay called '*khichang*'.
4. One piece of very soft newly sprouted banana leaf called '*najih*'.
5. A clay-figure of a squirrel called '*thoche*' and that of a bird called '*vengke*'.

²⁵ Lhouvum, Satkholal, Cultural Specialist & aged group of Motbung Village, Interviewed on 12th October, 2008

²⁶ Onions take the shortest span of time to sprout and grow into a full plant as compared to other vegetables that are grown by the Kukis

6. A clay pot of wine called 'jubel'. A water pot of made of clay called 'twibel'.
7. Nine small and one big clay figures of mithun called 'sel'.
8. A clay figure of a dead body called 'sohlung'.
9. A small clay model of an elephant tusk called 'saiha'.
10. A piece of rootstock of a plant called 'daibal'. The *daibal* root is like the rootstock of colocasia of the arum family.
11. A piece of 'dai-ai,' a kind of wild turmeric
12. A piece of 'langbel' (tiny crystal)
13. A swab of cotton and rice called 'phaidam'.
14. One 'gopitul' (bamboo pole)

The spirit manifests itself, is represented, or is propitiated in these material forms. The priest visits every cultivator's plot of land. At the edge of each plot, the priest arranges some articles in a circular formation beneath a tree. At the time of preparation, of the *Daiphu* the priest first arranges the materials in the formation of a circle. The egg is, however, kept apart for the time being either in the pocket or in bag of the priest or in a basket of the landowner. The priest then utters the following incantations sprinkling drops of wine near the *daiphu* materials in between his recitation:

O you wine which is prepared from the paddy and mim seeds.

May you propitiate the god of heaven and Nunjai, the god of the spheres.

(The priest sprinkles drops of wine from a small clay container he holds.)

Daikham Kaphu Bangin Daiyin

Loudai Kaphu Begin Daiyin

Siel Som Kapeh Kalhaina Nahe

Dah Pi Dahbu Kalutna Nahe

Khichang A Kalutna Nahe

Ka Ahpi Vom Tui, Ka Ahpi Bong Tui a Kalut Nahi.

Hiche Lou Munna Eisu Sedinga Daiyin

Mim Lha Chang Lha Kakouna Ahi

Tidam Ludam Kakouna Ahi

Free Translations:

Let the protecting herb calm the evil.

Let the calming herb bring in peace.

I offer you ten mithuns.

I submit before you with a set of gongs.

I surrender before you with beads.

I offer you in tribute the eggs of my black hen and grey hen.

Calm the evil that comes to destroy the paddy.

My prayer is for the souls of paddy.

My prayer is for good health (Gangte, 1993, p. 193).²⁷

The priest then takes out the egg, holds it in his hand, and chants the following incantation:

Nang ka tuilung theng ka tuilung vah

Kapun nadohngaija kadoh nahi

kapan Nadoh ngaija kadoh nahi

Tukum in Dampo'n nate phapo'n nate natileh

Tomsan tomvom in hin sep hen

Damna'n nate phana'n nate natileh

²⁷ Necessary changes made by Luntinsat Kipgen, Cultural Specialist, 28 July, 2010

Ka ahtui chih hunglet in hung thengselin (Goswami, 1985, p. 90)²⁸

Free Translations:

O, you egg! Your heart is clean and shining.

As my grandfather and my father used to ask you

I too now ask you whether during this year the owner

of this plot of land would be afflicted with diseases which

might even cause death to him. If it be so, as an indication

of it may the liquid inside you turn black and red. If it is not

to be, may the liquid inside you ooze out

in all its freshness.

After uttering the above words, the priest makes a small hole on the egg and peeps through it. If the inner liquid is fresh, shining and full, it presages good harvest and good health for the landowner. However, if it is black and red, it portends a bad harvest and possibilities of eventualities of death to the owner of the land. It is up to the discretion of the landowner to abandon cultivation because of such ill omen. Sometimes, the priest in his judiciousness does not reveal such ill-fated portent to the owner of the land (Goswami, 1985, p. 90).

He then plants the *turmeric* roots in a hole on the ground and covers it with soil and does the same with the *daibol* (the rootstock of colocasia of the arum family) roots (ibid, p. 91). He sprinkles drops of wine on the ring of bamboo sticks around the *roots* (ibid). After the ritual is performed, the owner of the land will go back to check on it, whether it is still intact. If the roots that is planted remains intact and articles inside have been lightly covered with soil, then it is presumed that the land was meant for them and that it would bring them good health and

²⁸ Necessary changes made by Luntinsat Kipgen, Cultural Specialist, 8 Nov., 2010

good fortune. After this, they wait upon the answer in their dreams, built a hut in the agricultural field and they would happily prepare themselves for agriculture.²⁹

b. Twikhuh Thoina Ritual

In case a natural water-spring happens to exist in a particular plot of land, the owner is required to perform the *twikhuh thoina* ritual³⁰ in addition to the *daiphu* on the same day (Goswami, 1985, p. 91). “Twikhuh” means water-spring and “thoina” means rites. The priest makes a small depression at the mouth of the spring, to collect the spring water (ibid). He stands facing the current of the flowing water of the spring, keeps the *Longbel* (a type of tiny crystals) in his pocket and holds the *Phaidam* (a little quantity of rice within a cotton swab) in his hand (ibid, p. 91-92).

The priest utters an incantation and throws the *phaidam* into the water. If the *Phaidam* remains submerged in the water, it is taken as a sign to go-ahead with the ritual (ibid, p. 92).³¹ There is then a make-believe conversation between the priest and the spirits of the water-spring. In the ritual, the priest negotiates with the spirits of the water-spring. He presents them with objects, which represents a gong and a red cloth in exchange for protection from ailment of the body and the mind. He then requests them to remain seven steps under the earth while they would reside on the surface. He also explains to them the rationality of keeping a distance from the human inhabitants assuming that they would not like to smell the bad odour of urine and excrement. Saying the above words, the priest drinks a handful of water of the spring. He then puts the *langbel* on the ground by the side of the spring (Goswami, 1985, p. 92-93).³²

²⁹ Singson, Tongkholam, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, interviewed on 13th October, 2008

³⁰ Kilong, Helthang, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, Interviewed on 14th October, 2008

³¹ Even if the *Phaidam* remains floated the ritual is performed though it may not be of much benefit

³² Necessary changes made by Helthang Kilong, cultural specialist of Motbung village, interviewed on 14th October 2008). Goswami did his fieldwork in Haflong, which is in North

In this ritual, we see them negotiating with the spirits who are thought to be earlier possessors of the land. Savyasaachi in citing a similar case of the Onges of Andaman Islands posits how ritual identifies those elements that transform a place into living space (Savyasaachi, 2001, p. 86). For the Onges, it is based on the belief that although spirits, humans, and animals share a common space, it is through their different capacities for movement that each remains alive within their different places within that space (ibid). The space is shared between nature (including humans) and supernatural (including spirits), and between human beings and non-human beings.

2.5.2 Ritual to Invoke Blessing and Good Fortune

a. The *Chang-Nungah* Ritual or the Ritual of the Maiden deity

A similar ritual, but one that is done after harvesting, is the *Chang-Nungah* ritual. The 'Chang-Nungah' is a rare paddy plant which remains without flowering or bearing grain and remains green throughout the entire paddy season despite the fact that the others plants are turning yellow and is ready for the harvest. It remains in that form unfazed with its green leaves intact refusing to change to the tunes of the changing times, unlike its counterpart who had moved on to the next stage by bearing grains of rice. When such a rare paddy is found in one's field, it symbolizes the presence of the sacred and it was believed that a proper reception of it will augment the harvest manifold. Therefore, an elaborate ritual reception is arranged in which the village priest, representatives of relatives of the ritual performer all participate (Chongloi, 2008, p. 168-169).

The 'Chang-Nungah ritual' is an interesting agricultural related ritual performed to invoke blessing as also to foresee the fate of a family in terms of prosperity in a given year. These stalks were compared to an unmarried woman. They were

Cachar Hills, and Helthang Kilong is a cultural specialist from Manipur. There are regional differences in the mythologies and the narratives of rituals of the Kuki society within India, as well amongst the Kukis settled in Myanmar (Burma) and Bangladesh

named *chang-nungah*, meaning maiden lady. In the lore of the Kuki people, this *chang-nungah* has an interesting significance. They were considered a harbinger of good fortune and harvest. Accordingly, they were revered and adorned as if a woman and the priest or *thempu*³³ performs a special ritual to appease it to bless the harvest and the field owner's family.

Legend has it that this practice was due to a story, which involved an old lady and two orphaned siblings. In the story, an old woman visits the village of the two siblings. The story says that the children were kind to her and accommodated her in their house. When the siblings went to the field, the old lady would close the doors, spread a mat like carpet named '*dop*' meant for drying the grains over fire in the traditional fire place. She would spread the mat on the floor of the house. She would sit on the mat and then shake her whole body. A strange thing would happen. From her body, rice grains would keep pouring until the spread-out mat became full. They no longer had to strive for a living and they lived comfortably. They affectionately named the old woman grandmother *Chaiching* or *Pi Chaiching*. The old woman was actually the spirit of the rice paddy.³⁴

With her blessing, the children became wealthy. The children however became vain and started ill-treating the old woman.³⁵ The old woman could no longer

³³ Thempu or village priest are ritual specialist. They have lost their significance with the advent of Christianity.

³⁴ Singson, Tongkhohlam, Cultural Specialist & aged group, interviewed on 13th October, 2008

³⁵ One day, grandmother Chaiching told her grandchildren, "My grandchildren, when you are tending the field, do not let any weed grow unattended, because when you do that there will be something stuck in my teeth and I cannot sleep at night due to the pain." The siblings had meanwhile become vain in their newfound affluence and status. They did not heed their grandmother's request but mischievously defy it and intentionally left the weeds in the paddy field unattended. Chaiching used to groan with pain throughout the night. The siblings watched her in pain and even made fun of her in the morning. During the harvesting season, Pi Chaiching requested her grandchildren again, "My grandchildren, until and unless you have gleaned every single stalks of paddy, you should not burn it." Once again, the children chose to disobey her. They burnt the paddy pile before the harvesting was over. Chaiching cried the whole night in pain and could not sleep. She said, "My whole body is burning." In the morning, Chaiching

stay with them. Before she left them, she told them a technique in which they could still enjoy a bountiful harvest. She told them that whenever the harvesting season arrives, she would appear as a *chang-nunghah* or maiden deity. If they heed her biddings and follow her instructions, then they would always be rich and prosperous but poor otherwise.³⁶ Then she told them how to tend the special paddy stalk or *chang-nunghah*. *Pi Chaiching* named the possibilities of her appearing in the form of different types of paddy stalks. They are –

1. *Sabolkhum*
2. *Sa-jam*
3. *Sakhongma*
4. *Samuntheh*
5. *Sabite*
6. *Sanelkai*

In case it appeared as *sabolkhum* and *sanelkai*, a pig had to be used in the ritual, whereas in all other conditions, a rooster was sufficient.³⁷ This is the reason why in the olden days and even in the recent past, there was a belief that whenever a *chang-nunghah* appeared in the field, they considered it as the spirit of the paddy and believed that it would bring them fortune and good health if they tend to it according to the instructions given.

b. Ritual for appeasing the *Chang-Nunghah*

For the *chang-nunghah*, a hut is built with length and breadth of one foot each and half feet tall from the ground on which it is erected. The hut should have

confronted her grandchildren and told them that, she had enough of the mean treatment meted out to her.

³⁶ Kilong, Helthang, Cultural Specialist and aged group, Interviewed on 14th October, 2008

³⁷ *ibid*

everything that is usually in the possession of any ordinary young woman; spool, thread, spinning wheel, weaving arrangement, bamboo container, comb, and nine sheaves of paddy. Moreover, there should be a ready fire near the threshing mill, ten coins and ten gongs should be ready among many other things.³⁸

Each family gets ready for the ritual to appease the *chang-nunghah*. They have to get the materials ready for the ceremony starting with a jar of rice-beer. After this, everyone will move towards the place where the already gleaned paddy stalks are kept. Then they will sit silently around the site usually in a circle. The Thempu or the priest would come with a robust rooster meant for the sacrificial ritual.

The ritual would include a drama in which the scene between the old woman and the children is replayed.³⁹

(Tehsepi) Hepi; Na inn na hunglunging kate

(Acting as the old lady) Will you let me rest in your house?

In asel-le (Jesung⁴⁰ ahi). Koima ka-in na hung lung theiponte. Jinpha nahim; jinse nahim?

(Acting as the villagers) It is not a good day/it is an auspicious day/a form of quarantine. Nobody is welcome in this house as there is no place to accommodate a guest. Are you a good guest or are you a bad guest?

Jinpha kahi-e; Changlha kapoi; mimlha kapoi; mitphat kapoi; hamphat kapoi; Chanu lha kapoi; Chapa lha kapoi; Sumlha kapoi; Sel lha Kapoi; Ti-dam kapoi; Lu-dam Kapoi; Valpa

³⁸ Kilong, Helthang, Cultural Specialist and aged group, interviewed on 14th October, 2008

³⁹ Kilong, Helthang, Cultural Specialist and aged group, interviewed on 14th October, 2008

bunga kon-na kahin vetleh; hilaija hin mei akhu-in; Sihmi lamjot; Khongbai lamjot kahin tho-a; kahin jot ahi.

(Acting as the old lady) I am a good guest; I carry with me the spirit of the paddy; the spirit of Job's tears; I bring you blessings; I carry the spirit of the daughter; I carry the spirit of the son; I carry the spirit of wealth and money; I carry the spirit of the mithun; I carry with me good health; health in the head; when I look down from the sky (valpa bunga), I could see smoke in this place. So I have come here by imitating the walk of the ants and grasshoppers.

Hicheng po chuba kahol ahi; hunglutnin; ati-a lampi-a thingtoi khat; kotkhah ding banga akoi chu alah doh peh a phol la chu alha lutding ahi.

(Acting as the villager) I have been on the lookout for such a guest who carries all those traits. Come in. Then he will lift a small wooden log meant to be a make-belief door and lead the guest to the place where harvest is kept.

The Tuchapu would take the three sheaves of rice paddy from his havers sack and pour it on the mat, and heads back towards the hut of the '*chang-nunghah*'. This dramatised conversation will be done three times and each time three out of the nine paddy stalks would be used. This would continue until the nine stalks are exhausted. This is an attempt by them to revive the past by enacting scenes.⁴¹ The most common cause of affliction is the neglecting or 'forgetting' (*ku-vulamena*) of the spirit. So, the most important aspect of the process of placation is to bring it back to memory, 'to make it known before many people' and to mention its name in their hearing' (Turner, 1996).⁴² "Understanding ritual

⁴¹ Op cit

⁴² A similar belief existed among the Polynesian society of Tikopia in Solomon Islands. The attitude of respect for the soil in Tikopia is due to the belief that their ancestors, who in the past owned and cultivated the land, still keep watch and ward over it. Their descendents are obliged to walk carefully lest they offend the powerful spirits on whose goodwill the fertility of crops depends. The ancestors do not take undifferentiated interest in all the lands of the community, but exercise their powers on the territory of their descendants alone. For this interest, gratitude is shown partly in ritual formulae and partly by material expressions of acknowledgement. In natives' own words: the cultivators must be regularly "bought" from the ancestors, and, "every

practice means restoring its practical necessity by relating it to real conditions of its genesis; the conditions in which it functions and the means it uses to attain them (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 114).” In sociological terms, this means that in a mobile and fissile society there is a strong tendency towards structural amnesia, which is dealt-with by rituals and which continually revive the memory of dead persons through whom the living are significantly interconnected (Turner, 1996, p. 295). Ritual enables the immediate past and the politico-kinship relations originating in it are to be alive, in spite of the social forces working in the opposite direction (ibid).

Then, the priest would take the rooster, pull out some of its feathers, and plant it in the front lawn of the *chang-nunghah*'s hut. He will mumble some words and start his incantation as a part of the ritual. Then the priest will take the cock and the three bundles of paddy stalks and move towards the pile of harvested paddy. Then he will cite the following incantation in which he will request the spirits of the paddy to be all around and all over the field and not move out from the field as its presence means blessing for that field.

The *Thempu* will take the rooster and mumbles slowly the following lines of incantation: “if the following year brings forth with it health and wealth for the family, give us a sign by your right leg, if it is not going to bring the family wealth and health, show us by your left leg.” Then the priest would behead the rooster and unleash it inside the barn. The rooster would keep jumping around the inside of the barn until it eventually dies. If it tries to jump out of the barn, they will drive it inside again and before it dies the priest check the legs of the rooster. Only the priest knows which hind leg emerged victorious. This decides the fate of the family in the following year. Then the priest would proclaim

season a ceremony takes place, the re-carpeting of the sacred houses, whereby a man renders due return to his forbears (Firth, 1957, p. 374).

aloud to the gathering including the landowner's family, "we shall be prosperous; we shall be healthy".⁴³

The folklore depicts the Kukis' traditional belief that the rice plant has a spirit or a soul. It can be either appeased or grieved. The symbolic meaning of the rites and rituals performed by the priest is to request the spirits of the rice plant to remain and not loiter from that particular field. There is a common saying among this tribe that is used in scolding children who plays with their food. It is believed that wealth runs away from people who fight, play or do not have respect for their food. The rituals facilitate a social discourse between humans and spirits. Sometimes a bigger animal is used for the sacrifice. The symbolic meaning of the sacrifice seems to be the substitution of the lives of the animal and bird in exchange for the prosperity and good fortune of the family.

The *Chang-Nungah* is the visible evidence of the existence of the spirits of the paddy. They could communicate to the spirits of rice plant and negotiate with it to be good to them through the medium of the *Chang-nungah*. There is a relation of power in ritual attempts to exercise control over the natural environment. Mircea Eliade cites an example from Timor:

...when a rice field sprouts, someone who knows the mythical traditions concerning rice goes to the spot. 'He spends the night there in the plantation hut, reciting the legends that explain how man came to possess rice [origin myth]...Those who do this are not priests.' Reciting its origin myth compels the rice to come up as fine and vigorous and thick as it was when it appeared for the first time. The officiant does not remind it of how it was created in order to 'instruct' it, to teach it how it should behave. He magically compels it to go back to the beginning, that is, to repeat its exemplary creation (Eliade, 1963, p. 15-16).

⁴³ Singson, Tongkholam, Cultural Specialist & aged group, interviewed on 13th October, 2008

2. 5. 3 Ritual of Thanksgiving for a Bountiful Harvest

a. Chang-Ai and Sa-ai

Chang-Ai' is a festival performed by a person who has harvested paddy much above his requirements for more than a decade. The intention is to express gratitude to God for the bountiful harvests (Singsit, 2010, p. 92). "*Sa-ai* and *Chang-ai* are on the same scale – the former performed by man, and the latter, by woman. *Sa* means animal and *ai* is usually translated as 'subjugation', thereby denoting a ritual of subjugating or having complete dominance over the animals killed. In the same manner *chang* (paddy) *ai* is seen as victory over the soul of paddy. We prefer to see the occasion as the 'conferment of degree' to a person who has qualified for a higher degree in the many modes of existences in a person's life. For man, it is his duty to hunt games and provide sufficient meat for family members, and also provide occasional feasting for the villagers. Woman on the other hand, is responsible for procuring abundant grain for the family. Therefore, when surplus grain is accumulated for several consecutive years, she is considered fulfilling her duty, thus entitled to perform *chang-ai* (Chongloi, 2008, p. 141)."

In religious sphere, the person who performed *Sa-ai* and *Chang-ai* had earned uninterrupted passage to life beyond, that is, heaven. The Thadou-Kukis believed that a certain devil by the name *Kulsamnu* dwells on a path leading to *mithikho* (village of the death) and she delight in harassing everyone who pass through the path. But she dares not touch the souls of those who have performed *sa-ai*, *chang-ai* and *chon*. Thus, the function of the celebrations transcends beyond a mere show of extravaganza or wealth or skill, but is a preparation to enter a different mode of existence. It is also a celebration that they have overcome the 'difficult passage' towards that changeover, and such persons when they die, their bodies are accorded honourable disposal different from the ordinary mortals (Chongloi, 2008, p. 141).

b. The *Kut* or Post Harvesting Festival

The importance of ritual and ceremonies to maintain and preserve a strong sense of identity is felt even in the modern times. *Kut* or the Harvesting Festival has attained the status of a state festival and is observed on the first day of the month of November. *Kut* is a post-harvest festival and the most important non-religious social event for all the Chins, Kukis and Mizos worldwide.⁴⁴ The modern *Kut*, first known as *Chavang Kut* was revived in 1979 in the state of Manipur. It is celebrated every year in all Chin/Kuki/Mizo areas of Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Assam, Tripura, Chittagong Hill tracts of Bangladesh and in some areas of Myanmar (Burma) (Gangte, 2008, p. 78).

This Thanksgiving folk festival is observed with full gaiety after the year's fieldwork is done and reaping is stored for the next full year (Gangte, 2006). "The basic concept behind the observance is, therefore, that the toiling community has to have a short respite and recreation after the year's work has been reaped and before the new-year's work is begun (Gangte, 2008, p. 81)." It is observed to mark the end of the arduous yearlong toil, sweat and hard work. It is also an occasion when the village community praises God for the blessings given to them. Such activities that intercede between the supernatural object and the society being of collective welfare in nature, observance of certain occasions as *Kut* and the rituals associated therewith are essentially of community in nature.

⁴⁴ In the past, the common ritualistic rites for this purpose are the offering of a cock and a bowl of rice placed at the altar of the deities. The village priest and the chief preside over the ritual. The neck of the cock is cut with a sharp knife and the blood is strewn on the altar and on powdered rice. Then, the village priest will start sipping the wine called '*ju*', which is prepared for the occasion. The priest will spit out the first mouthful of the wine in a symbolic offering to the deities. He then invites the Chief of the village, followed by the eldest villager present to start sipping the '*ju*.' The sipping bout continues by turn until the last person. With it, the celebration commences being followed soon by drinking, singing, merry-making, dancing, sporting and feasting (Gangte, 2008, p. 82).

Rites and rituals give strong elements of ethnic affinity and influence on their social cohesion and solidarity. It also symbolizes the integrating force among the members of community, cutting across tribal boundaries and linguistic differences. Relations established by rituals cut sharply across kinship and territorial ties and even across tribal affiliation in the case of the *Kut* festival. These ceremonial activities serve to establish as well as preserve the bondage between the people and their territories over which they exercise their control in their everyday lives.

2. 6 Conclusions

The Chapter shows the interdependence between man and nature and the respect attributed by the Thadou-Kukis towards the environment which sustains them. Agriculture or cultivation ensures the physical survival of the group. The fact that it is valued is signified by the fact that it is highly ritualised. The rituals are attempts to appease spirits that are believed to have a temporal authority over the land and its produce. Therefore, the idea is to appease them in their favour. Though it is a collective ceremony, where almost all the villagers participate, the ritual is directed to the family who initiates it. In Daiphu ritual, it is sometimes directed to the villagers as a whole as in the case of finding a site for the community Jhum land. The *chang-nughah* ritual also shows the symbolic relationship between land and woman in the society. The ritual is dramatised in a way to replenish society's collective sentiments. The core purpose is the periodic reaffirmation of social order.

As Tinker had accorded in the American Indian case, the rituals of the Thadou-Kukis reflect the tribal worldview of a sense of reciprocity and respect towards the other creations in the cosmos. The local people know the need for a built-in compensation for human actions or some act of 'reciprocity' (Tinker, 2008, p. 68). Rituals facilitate a discourse between human and spirits to prevent a crossing of their paths. It is a clear demarcation and marking of each other separate domains

of existence or 'space' and an essence of respect for the other. This mark of respect for land is reflected in the socio-cultural life of the people, which in turn determines the way the society is organised.

Today the '*Thempu*' or Priest's role has been taken over by the Christian pastors. Prayer to gods and spirits has been replaced. People still pray before each stages of agriculture production or before choosing a site for cultivation but to a different God. With the degrading role of the village priest, the significance of the role of land rituals has also diminished. Compared to the priest, the chief's role is still intact to a certain extent, in villages where chieftainship system still exists. The Kut or harvesting festival have been retained and have attained the status of a state level festival, not only for the Thadou-Kukis, but also for all Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribes. The relevance and significance of other festivals are minimal in the present day. Ritual plays an integral role in enabling the Thadou men to understand his identity in relation to other creations in the cosmos, and thus accordingly, construct the definition of his own identity. The worldview of the Thadous was a religious one, even before the arrival of the missionaries. This worldview associate's nature, man and a Supreme Being as connected in a system and attributed the existence of the cosmos to the supernatural. The feeling of supremacy over nature, hierarchy, centrality or anthropocentric attitude, which is so familiar in modern day, was not evident in the past. The encounters between colonialism and land will be the subject for discussion in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Colonialism and Land

3.1 Introduction

The Land question provided a terrain like no other in the colonial period, in which issues of rights entailments and obligations were realized and thoroughly contested. It is important since the control of land and other resources provided a vital arena for the local people challenges to the colonial state, which re-inforced the anti-colonial movement, because of the centrality of the land question and its role in defining local people reaction to and engagement with colonial rule (Ibhawoh,2007, p. 88).

The expansion of the European imperialists became conspicuous in different parts of the old world outside Europe during the 19th century. A need was felt to protect the native institutions against the disruptive effect of European contacts (Sarkar, 2006, p. 7). This led to the administering of a new concept of 'indirect rule' in the colonial administration (ibid). Similarly, in the pre-British era, the internal administration of the tribal people in India was governed by the application of their uncodified and unwritten customary laws. This was functional within and under the hegemony of a dominant government.

The Colonial experience of the Hill Tribes of Manipur is in many ways similar to those of colonial Africa. Discussions about land in the colonial and the immediate post-colonial period were conducted largely in relation to the ideas and systems introduced by the colonial state. Land was often at the centre of early conflicts between the British authorities and the local rulers. "The Land and Native Rights Ordinance introduced in Northern Nigeria in 1911 was based on the assumption that land ownership was communal, with the chiefs holding it in trust for the collective benefit of the people (Ibhawoh, 2007, p. 101)." The standard argument on land, which is similar to the case of the Thadou-Kukis, ran

thus: First, all the native lands were held by the principal chiefs and heads of the community, in trust for the entire community; second, all these lands is under the control of the colonial Governor, who through British conquest had taken the place of the “paramount chief,” to administer according to native law and custom for the common benefit of the people (ibid, P. 89).

A common feature in all colonial states all over the world is that, it usually fails to take into consideration the regional uniqueness of the pre-colonial land tenure systems and the scope of rights that local kings, chiefs and the people enjoyed under it. There is a need to study the local peoples’ conception of space and the forms of territorialisation wrought on these systems by the period of colonial subjugation. This is crucial to understand the present issues of land and identity in Manipur. In view of that, the chapter¹ will focus on the varied experiences of colonialism in the Hills of Manipur with particular reference to the Thadou-Kuki society. It will study both the administrators and missionaries as colonial agencies and try to trace the varied instruments of colonialism that changed the traditional land structure and impede the principality that governs the Thadou-Kuki² society. The focus will also be on the colonial imprint and policies of the

¹ The Chapter will make use of colonial ethnographies like –

1. Official writings like government reports, military or topographical reports, gazetteers, administrative reports, archival materials, ethnographic and academic monographs written by colonial administrators.
2. Personal and unofficial writings like autobiography, diary, private letters, memoirs, accounts from close associates of the missionaries or the first convert, travelogues etc., missionary literatures: field reports, Christian literature, autobiographies and discussion papers of missionary conference.
3. Scholarly interpretation and analysis of colonial ethnographies in the form of research works and published books as secondary materials.

² The term “Thadou-kuki” is likely to create some confusion because all the Thadous are Kukis but not vice-versa. Kuki is a broad term like Naga. The research will use the compromised term “Thadou-Kuki” and in this work the use of the term “Kuki” in different places will mainly emphasise the “Thadou-Kukis.” In this regard, it is necessary to point out here the serious problem of identity of the term Kuki and Thadou. In fact, there are two views prevailing now. One is the pro-Kuki view and the other is the pro-Thadou view. While the pro-Thadou group went on insisting on the term Kuki as a foreign term and a baseless colonial construct for administrative convenience, the pro-Kuki group insisted on a pan-tribal stand under the

British towards the hill tribes; the interplay between indigenous leadership and colonial power, sociological implications of the various land-based conflicts and the contribution of colonial encounter in re-ordering of space and society.

3. 2 Colonialism

By 'colonialism', we mean cultural domination with enforced social change. In the colonial past, we find grandiose attempts by a small group of innovators such as missionaries and administrators, to implement radical changes upon a massive and often unwilling or uncomprehending population (Beidelman, 1982, p. 2). "Imperialistic colonialism involves a sense of mission, of spreading a nation's vision of society and culture to an alien subjected people (ibid, p. 2)." In common usages, the term is usually used to imply the extension of European and American powers in the non-Western world during the Vasco da Gama era (1492 – 1947) (Neill, 1966, p. 11).

Colonialism can be differentiated from Imperialism. Imperialism for Edward Said is 'the practice, theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory', a process distinct from colonialism, which is 'the implanting of settlements on a distant territory' (Ashcroft et al, 2002, p. 90). The differences between empire and imperialism can be understood as under:

Empire is the relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. Imperialism distinguishes itself from empire, because while the establishment of empires by the active colonisation of territories has ended, Imperialism 'lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political,

nomenclature Kuki. The scheduled tribe list of Manipur 1950 in fact recognised the term Kuki, but in the modified list of 1956, the term Kuki was omitted and the term Thadou was included. As against this, the pro-Kuki group have time and again registered their voice of protest and even insisted on the revision of the list of scheduled tribes of Manipur and included Kuki in the list.² In view of the above tension between groups about the nomenclature and identity of the terms, a compromised term has been used here in this work.

ideological, economic, and social practices'. Its very investment in culture makes imperialism a force that exists far beyond a geographical empire, corresponding in contemporary times to what Kwame Nkrumah (1909-72), the first President of Ghana, called 'neo-colonialism' (1965) (ibid).

Colonialism exhibits "an expansionist and proselytizing ethos" based on a sense of both 'duty and domination' and manifested in a policy of paternal guardianship (as cited in Beidelman, 1982, p. 4). This involves an attempt at transforming a subject people who are judged inferior to the colonial rule yet capable of conversion to a "higher" level, albeit one judged unequal to that of their masters and teachers. These notions are intensified in a religious mission and appear in all such colonialist endeavours (ibid).

Views on the colonial impact on a society are markedly different from a missionary or coloniser's point of view to those of the colonised native as also amongst the scholars. For Homi Bhabha, the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin. This is done in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction (Bhabha, 2001, p. 391). The discourse of colonialism would have it that the colonized subject is the 'Other' of the Westerner, essentially outside Western culture and civilization (Bhabha, 1994, p. 66-84).

Padel examined the relationship between the colonisers and the Kond tribe of Orissa; more specifically the former's reaction to the latter's customs and ways of life. He wrote:

Missionaries' self-sacrifice is often extreme and their benevolence, especially in education and medicine, seems beyond question. But it is a fundamental bias in their outlook which polarises people, in the idea that Christianity is superior to other religions and that only Christians can be 'saved'. Behind a mask of meekness, there is thus an enormous arrogance and violence in the missionary

enterprise: a fundamental 'closed ness' and prejudice against other cultures and religions (Padel, 1995, p. 185).

In understanding colonial writings, it would be useful to discuss at the onset the two types of study as given by B.S. Cohn. Cohn differentiates ethno-historians from colonial historians. Cohn considers ethno-history as the historical study of any-European peoples utilizing documentary, oral and archaeological sources and the conceptual framework and insight of cultural and social anthropology. These types of studies attempt to reconstruct the history of indigenous peoples before and after European contact. The ethno-historian tries to perceive historical events from the position of the aborigines rather than that of European administrators. He is more interested in the impact of the colonial policy and practice than in the genesis of these policies in the metropolitan society (as documented by B.K. Roy Burman in Mackenzie, 2007, p. 12). Colonial historians are those who are chroniclers of events, which are relevant from the point of view of colonial administration of the time (ibid, p. 13).

3. 3 Administrations of Hill Areas during Colonial Period

The arrival of the British in North East India goes back to 1761 when the East India Company and the Nawab of Bengal (through their combined armed forces) assaulted Tripura (Chaube, 1973, p. 3). It was after the Treaty of Yandabo, concluded at the end of the first Anglo-Burman war, between the East India Company and the kingdom of Burma on 24th February 1826 that British rule began in North East India (Downs, 1992. p. 6). The earliest recorded visit to North-East India was made in 1626 by two Jesuits, Frs. Stephen Cacella and John Cabral, who were looking for a passage to Tibet (Downs, 1994, p. 40). In the nineteenth century, the Baptists of Serampore under William Pettigrew, an English missionary of the Arthington Aborigines Mission Society, showed missionary interest in the North East of India (Sithou, 2006, p. 4). He became the first missionary to go to Manipur with full patronage from a British official Mr. A. Porteous, the acting Political Agent (Dena, 1988, p. 31).

The geographical division of Manipur into valley and hills undoubtedly provided the best opportunity to the British for the application of their well-known “divide and rule” policy. J. Shakespeare, Political Agent (1905-1907), placed the scheme for future administration of the state, which deliberately excluded the hill territory on the plea that “the hill tribes are not Manipuris and have entirely different customs and languages” (Dena, 2006, p. 3).

After the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891, the hill areas were brought under the British rule by keeping the hill administration under the personal responsibility of the Political Agent (Kipgen, in Priyoranjan Singh’s (ed), 2009, p. 332). “The *Sanad* issued by the British authority to Raja Churachand Singh clearly stated that the final authoritative control rested with the British (ibid).” Besides the Political Agent, the administration and control of the hill tribes were also left in the hands of the vice-president. In their approach to the hill peoples, the colonial officials adopted a paternalistic attitude. This was merely confined to the formal recognition of tribal chiefs only and beyond this, nothing was done to improve the living condition of the people (Dena, 2006, p. 3). It is to be noted that in the Hills of Manipur, as a legacy from the British period, individual rights given to the Tribal Chiefs over the jurisdiction of their village land was given cognizance by the government. The rights of the chief within the jurisdiction of the village were recognised. The document issued by the Sub-Division Officers or District Magistrates was considered to be equivalent to patta in the valley (Gangte, 2010, p. 132). In 1893, the hill areas were divided for the first time into five subdivisions namely Mao, Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Tengnoupal, and Churachandpur (Kshetri, 2006, p. 4).

During the colonial rule particularly after 1891, the hill forests were for the first time classified into three categories—village reserved forests, state reserved forests and open reserved forests. The only method of cultivation, as practised by the indigenous population, was shifting which required a vast expanse of cultivable forests. Surprisingly, the management of forests came under the direct

control of the durbar in which no hill men were represented. According to the forest act of 1927, the hill forests continued to be administered exclusively by the state government (Dena, 2006, p. 5).

Under the Constitution Act of 1935 or the Government of India Act of 1935, the central government was anxious to bring all states still in relations with local governments into direct relation with the Government of India. There was a special consideration in the case of Manipur. Relations with the state were to be conducted by the Governor of Assam in his personal capacity as an agent of the crown representative, and by letter No. F.544–P/36, dated the 1st April 1937, he was authorised under section 287 of the Act to discharge such functions of the crown in relations with Manipur state as had hitherto been performed by the Governor in council of Assam (Reid, 1997, p. 95).

After suppression of the Kukis in 1919, the British introduced certain innovative measures for consolidation of powers and better administration of Manipur which heralded the dawn of modern system of administration. They are –

1. State boundary of Manipur defined and well demarcated;
2. State Darbar for administration of the hill areas surrounding the valley of Imphal continued with improvements in the system;
3. The Governor of Assam made the appellate authority in the event of differences between the Maharajah and the Darbar, a measure that has an effect of virtual removal of the hill areas from the jurisdiction of the Maharajah;
4. Setting up three administrative sub-divisional headquarters at –
 - a. Tamenglong – North-west Sub-Divisional headquarters with William Shaw appointed as SDO
 - b. Ukhrul – North-East Sub-Divisional headquarters with LR Peter as SDO

c. Churachandpur—South-West Sub-Divisional headquarters with Casper as SDO (Gangte, 2010, pp. 152-153).

The President of the Darbar was responsible for administration of the entire hill areas of Manipur state on behalf of the Maharaja (Das, 1989, p. 12). A separate budget was set aside for the administration of the hill areas for the first time. The village administration remained unchanged. Most disputes, except certain heinous offences against the state, were settled in accordance with the tribal customs (Kshetri, 2006, p. 5). The demand for responsible government gained momentum in Manipur during the 1940s. The Maharajah wanted to introduce some political reforms in the state. Pearson, the president of the state durbar, insisted that until and unless separate hill administration regulation was sanctioned, no new constitution would come into effect (Dena, 2006, p. 4). The Maharaja formed the Manipur State Interim Council on the eve of independence. Out of the seven members of the councils selected by the Maharaja, two were hill representatives (Kshetri, 2006, p. 6). One amongst the hill representatives was made to be in charge of the hill areas. This was the first time in which the hill people were given the chance to participate in the management of their own affairs (ibid).

3. 4 British Policies towards the Kukis

According to T.S. Gangte, the British policy towards the Kukis changes from the policy of 'non-interference' or Political Laissez Faire to Forward Policy (Gangte, 2010, p. 120). This has to be understood in the larger context of their policies towards the North East India and Burma (ibid, p. 118).

3. 4. 1 Policy of Non-Interference or Political Laissez Faire or Kukis as Buffers

Initially, the British colonial policy was to insulate British territory from any Burmese threat. When the large-scale migration of new Kukis took place in 1840, McCulloch, Political Agent, was entrusted with the work of settlement of Kukis.

The general policy of the British towards the Kukis in Manipur was that of non-interference. Col. McCulloch adopted this policy from the very beginning of their settlement in Manipur in the mid 19th century (Ray, 1990, p. 76). The British policy of non-interference with the Nagas was abandoned long before in 1861. This was to protect the British subjects from the Naga raids. The initial policy towards the Lushais was to refrain from the direct administration and giving the chiefs full independence in the administration of the hills. This policy was abandoned afterwards when the Lushai Expedition was harboured under the leadership of Col. Lister in 1850. This was in response to the outrage committed by the Lushais in the British territory, Cachar and Sylhet. This culminated in the Lushai Expedition of 1871-72. Compared to the two immediate neighbouring tribes, the Thadou-Kuki chiefs enjoyed Laissez Faire for a considerably longer period of time (Ray, 1990, pp. 76-77).

In the words of Asok Kumar Ray, this independence was adopted as a tactic of divide and rule. At the time of settlement of the Thadou-Kukis, the Lushais and the Nagas were the main enemies of the British. In order to subdue them, the Thadou-Kuki Chiefs were given special benefit of autonomy by the British as a part of their appeasement policy. This was done so that they might not only recognise the British authority as a saviour and friend, but also organised their tribal subjects against the neighbouring recalcitrant tribes under the protection and directives of their colonial masters (ibid, p. 77).

McCulloch, the Governor General studied the Kukis carefully before approaching them. He adopted a superficial sympathetic approach to the Kukis (Thadou-Kukis). He knew that the sole objective of the Kuki exodus was to secure land for cultivation and not for conquest (Gangte, 2010, p. 122). He befriended them, allotted lands in different places according to their number, and where their presence would be useful on exposed frontiers, thus scattering them all over the hills surrounding the valley of Imphal without being allowed to occupy compact areas so that they might be easily subdued in the event of

such future exigency (Johnstone, 1987, pp. 26-27). McCulloch made the following observation:

...I encourage them to come and go, though if it were possible, the Sootie (Sukte) tribe to be attacked, and treacherously planned to protect themselves by exposing other Kuki tribes with arms to confront with the Sukte Kukis and the Lushai Kukis as and when the latter attacked Manipur. In connection with these people (Sukte and Lushai Kukis), and as a protection to the South of the valley, the Raja and I have established in the south villages of Kookies (Kukis), to whom are given arms, and whom we call sepoy villages. They are to be unrestricted in their cultivation, and have to send scouts to watch the tribes at the season when they are most able to move about and to mischief. These sepoy villages are not quite settled, but by care they might be brought to a proper state of usefulness (as documented in Gangte, 2010, p. 121).

McCulloch purposely settled Kukis on the exposed frontiers and among the Nagas. He is said to have given them a large sum of money to the Kukis from his own pocket and also recruited many of them in the service of the state. The policy of McCulloch in the settlement of Kukis was highly appreciated by both the state government and the supreme authorities in Calcutta. The settlement of close to the frontiers served double purposes. The Kukis had to act as a buffer, first against any Burmese invasion, and secondly, against Nagas or Mizos. In this way, the Kukis constituted a very strong base for frontier defence. In like manner, the British officials had previously used the Nagas first against the Burmese and then against the Kukis and Mizos. On different occasions, such as the invasion of Mao-Nagas in north Manipur, the Suktes in south Manipur and the Naga uprising in Kohima in 1879, the British army officers effectively used the Kuki warriors and this was perhaps the time when the first seed of enmity was sown between the two ethnic groups (Dena, 2006, p. 5).³

Alexander Mackenzie wrote the Kukis as migrants from the south who had previously occupied the hills south of Cachar. From there, they were driven by the advanced northward of a more powerful people from the unexplored country between British province and Burma (Mackenzie, 2007, p. 146).

Before the establishment of the Naga Hills District, proposals were frequently made to utilise these Kookies (Kukis) as a buffer or screen between our more timid subjects and the Angamis. In 1856-57, lands were assigned rent-free for 10 and afterwards for 25 years to any Kookies who would settle to the east of North Cachar beyond the Langting River. Government gave them firearms and ammunitions. In 1859, about 600 Kookies (Kukis) had accepted free settlement on these terms, and in 1860, the colony contained 1356 inhabitants in seven villages. The Angamis avoided these villages, so the country in the rear of the Kookie (Kuki) settlement was free from incursions (ibid).

Out of this policy, two significant developments took place. First, the Thadoe (Thadou) Kukis, due to their association with the British army, they became militarily much stronger than other neighbouring tribe, and this prove advantageous for them. The most likely reason for choosing the Kukis in their schema could be that the British Government always preferred tribal organisation led by chiefs to a democratic organisation, probably because it was easy to control them through the chiefs (Bhadra, 1975, p. 21). The Thadous' due to their services to the state enjoyed a special position. As Hutton wrote "the Thado (Thadou), ruled as they are by their own well recognised chiefs and treated as they had been in the past at any rate, by the Manipur state as allies as much as subjects, managed their own affairs in their own way and had recourse to their courts only in exceptional cases" (as cited in Bhadra, 1975, p. 21).

In pursuance of its policy of non-interference, the British tried "direct control, personal influence, conciliatory intercourse supported at the same time by adequate strength" as its measures (Gangte, 2010, p. 124). The British arranged an annual gathering of chiefs at some convenient place in the hills. In the

occasion, the Superintendent representing the British Government received trifling offerings from each chief. He bestowed on them presents in return. He also took the opportunity of hearing and redressing all complaints and grievances, and of encouraging free and friendly communication between them and the people of the plains (ibid, p. 125).

During the initial period of the Kuki Uprising between the years 1917 to 1919, the Political Agent Higgins tried the policy of negotiation and conciliation in deference to the desire of higher authority (Gangte, 2010, p. 120). Higgins became the Political Agent on Colonel H.W.G. Cole's departure to France with the Labour Corps (as cited in Chishti, 2004, p. 11). He arranged for a Durbar and invited the Kuki Chiefs to attend (Shakespeare, 1977, p. 210). The main objectors among the Chiefs, Chief Ngulkhup of Mombi and Chief Ngulbul of Longya, two important villages south of Imphal, refused to attend the Durbar. They gave "insolent replies" and threatened that if force was used against them they would retaliate in like measure to resist the British (Palit, 1919, p. 62).

Mrs. Cole, the wife of H.W.G. Cole, the Political Agent who was away in France with the Labour Corps decided to take hand in the proceedings (ibid). Both she and her husband had been good friends of the Chief of Mombi and she thought the officiating Political Agent was not handling the state of affairs properly (ibid, pp. 62-63). She reached Shuganu (Sugnu) and hold talks with Chief Ngulkhup and three of his headmen. Unfortunately, Mrs. Cole was not successful in persuading the Chief to compromise with the British plan (ibid, p. 63).

The aftermath was that, there was a change in approach from conciliatory to the use of show of force (ibid, p. 62). Thereafter, Higgins, the political agent in charge, prepared a policy of 'active interference' (Forward Policy) in the form of subjugation with arms, which he thought was the only way the Kukis could understand (Gangte, 2010, pp. 120-121). Colonel L.W. Shakespeare wrote:

The insolent messages from Mombi and Longya requiring active notice being taken, the officiating Political Agent, with Captain Coote and 100 rifles, marched in September to visit Mombi, six days out from Imphal, where open hostility greeted them. A skirmish followed and the place was destroyed, after which they were en route for Longya, when orders were received to return and take no further action with the Kukis (Shakespear, 1977, p. 210).

3. 4. 2 Forward Policy or Kuki Punitive Measures during the Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919

The 'Kuki Rebellion,' as the British termed the uprising, was more in the nature of a tribal outburst against oppressive measures than a 'rebellion', that is, the term 'rebellion' might be an inappropriate term to define (Palit., 1919, p. 61). The records of 1917-1919, available in the archives of the British Library in London, is entitled 'Kuki rising', and not 'Kuki uprising'. 'Rising' is a political terminology symbolising the national status of Kuki, who were not under British rule; 'uprising', on the other hand, implies a subjugated nation in rebellion (Haokip, 2002).

The event that leads to the revolt can be summarised in the following manner. The First World War required the British Government to ask for labour force to assist them in the battlefields of France (Bhadra, 1975, p. 11). The British government demanded the province of Assam for furnishing quota of labourers for employment with the army in France during the war (Ray, 1990, pp. 64-65). "Labour Corps had been raised for France in 1916 amongst various clans of Nagas, Lushais and others, who willingly came in, having in many cases done this sort of work for Government before in border expeditions, and knew the work and good pay (Shakespear, 1977, p. 209)." In 1917, with the support of the Maharajah, the British enlist labourers to serve the Allied forces in France (Parratt, 2005, p. 42). As demands for labourers from France and Mesopotamia increased, the Political Department decided to extend the recruitment to the

various clans of the Kukis settling in the hill regions of Manipur state (Palit, 1919, pp. 61-62).

The various Kuki clans inhabiting the native State of Manipur were a people who had never left their hills and knew very little of the English man's way. They refused to cooperate and argued that this was not their war and that they did not intend to cooperate with an administration that had treated them unjustly (Shakespeare, 1977, p. 210). Furthermore, they pointed out that by the ancient custom of their people, they were under no obligation to provide young men to serve a government that had not conquered them in battle (Downs, 1971, p. 169). The Administration Report of the Manipur State for the year 1917-1918 records:

As regards the hill tribes, political conditions were abnormal throughout the year. The two outstanding events were— (1) the despatch in May 1917 to France of the 22nd Manipur Labour Corps consisting of 2,000 Nagas and Kukis living in Manipur Hills; (2) the development of opposition on the part of the majority of the Kuki tribes to recruiting for the Labour Corps into an open armed rebellion against the British Government.⁴

In a letter to Mr. J.E. Webster, Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Mr. Higgins the Political Agent in Manipur wrote:

When I returned I found things very bleak, as regard recruiting, all the Kukis and the Maram tribe have refused to send coolies. On Thursday, I heard that many of the Kukis chiefs had assembled at a village 20 miles west of here to hold a council. I at once send out a Lambu (hill peon) to tell them to meet me on Friday, I started out to meet them. However, I met men with news that they had dispersed two days previously, but that they wished to see me ten days later if I would meet them. I have accordingly sent out word to all the chiefs to meet me three marches from here on the 9th October. This gives the farther villages time to

⁴ Administration Report of the Manipur State for the Year 1917-1918, p. 2

come in. But it is still extremely doubtful whether they will supply the men we required.⁵

In the first week of March 1917, Chengjapao Chief of Aisan, held a gathering of various chiefs to deliberate on the impending war. According to Kuki custom, a buffalo was slaughtered on the occasion, and *Shajam lha* was performed. *Shajam lha* is an auspicious tradition: the flesh of the animal is distributed among the chiefs to mark solidarity; the heart and liver is shared, symbolising commitment to the cause. The same tradition was observed at the Chassad Conclave, as well as at Jampi, Henglep, Mombi (Lonpi), Joujang, Phailengjang (present day upper Chindwin), Haflong (present day Assam) and Mechangbung (present day Nagaland).⁶ The first person to adopt an obstructive means was a Thadou chief, Mr. Chengjapao of Aisan (a village in present day Ukhrul district of Manipur) who had sent orders to all the leading chiefs to resist recruitment with force if necessary. Other influential chiefs also reported to have taken similar steps, and the messengers sent to several villages met with opposition (Ray, 1990, p. 68). The Kukis had a very ingenious system of spreading news, which was very effective in this area. The message consisted of burnt wood, a chilli, a bullet; gunpowder etc. each signifying some kind of instruction (Bhadra, 1975, p. 34). Colonel L.W. Shakespear wrote:

During these operations, all the advantage lay with the active scantily-clad Kukis, armed certainly only with the old "Brown Bess," but who know their hills and forests, carry no packs, do not bother themselves over supplies who are rarely seen in their forests, and who are adepts at guerrilla and jungle warfare (Shakespear, 1977, p. 236).

Major John Butler wrote that savages people are likely to manifest greater boldness and presumption when their aggression is passed with impunity or their acts of violence are not instantly chastised. Procrastination or forbearance

⁵ Letter from Mr. Higgins, Political Agent in Manipur to Mr. Webster, Imphal dated 24-9-1917

⁶ Haokip, S., 2002, *The Kuki Rising 1917-1919*, Paper Presented at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Seminar Organized by Kuki Students' organization

on the part of the Britishers to deal with it immediately is construed by them as fear (as cited in Shakespear, 1977, pp. 211-212). Thus, the start of the rebellion was largely due to the habit of procrastination of the Britishers' in not dealing at once and fully with it when the trouble first showed itself (ibid).

According to Shakespear, the government's mistake was that when the trouble first showed itself, it was not firmly dealt with (ibid, p. 235). Moreover, because the First World War was in progress, large force of regulars could not be employed in suppressing the rising (ibid). Bhadra opined that the British official documents have viewed the Thadoe (Thadou) war as the outcome of two causes—(a) the recruitment for labour corps for warfare in France and (b) the wrong administrative approach (Bhadra, 1975, p. 14).

Chishti (2004), Bhadra (1975), Ray (1990) and Reid (1997) suggested the role of *Lambus* as intermediaries as one of the possible causes of the rebellion. According to Ray (1990, p. 66), *Lambus* were appointed by the British and acted as a go between the hill people and the British administration and would convey the directives of the government from time to time. The *Lambus* were originally intended to be interpreters, but they soon developed into petty officials, advisors and administrators, whose role devalued the traditional authority of the chiefs. They were said to be open to bribery. This caused considerable antagonism and resentment on the part of the local people who felt alienated from the administration (Parratt, 2005, p. 43). The administration was seriously out of touch with their hill subjects, that the latter were not always well treated, and that there were genuine grievances and genuine abuses behind the immediate cause, i.e., the question of recruitment for the Labour Corps, which turned discontent into open rebellion (Reid, 1997, p. 79).

The Thadous section of the Kukis had from the start taken the lead in opposing recruitment, and one chief had actually even threatened to destroy any villages, that cooperated with the second recruitment. During the same time a Meetei

Prophet, Chingakham Sanajaoba, was going about the hills declaring that British rule as coming to an end, and that warriors who opposed it would be immune to British bullets. The smouldering resentment broke out in December 1917 and the Thadous' raided the South of the valley (Parratt, 2005, p. 43). Parratt wrote:

Initial attempts by the Assam Rifles to subdue them proved ineffective, and the Assam Rifles suffered heavy casualties in attempting to take the strongly fortified Kuki stockades. The Thadous then destroyed telegraph lines and cut the road to Burma. Thus was more alarming since the Burmese Chins, who were ethnically related to the Kukis had begun to rise up at the same time (ibid).

T.S. Gangte stated that the case of the Kukis from Burma was different from that of Manipur Kukis (Gangte, 2010, p. 99). The Kukis from Burma had really no grievance against the Government, but joined the war simply out of sympathy with their brethren across the border and in token expression of clan royalty as tradition and culture provided for (ibid).

The war directed against the British also had serious repercussions towards the neighbouring tribes as well. In the early months of 1918, some section of the Kukis began to take advantage of the unrest to settle old scores with their traditional Naga enemies. The Kabuis, Tangkhuls and the Koms all suffered from violent attacks and the Assam Rifles had to be sent back to protect them. T first, the British appeared to be losing control as destruction of property and loss of lives spread into the Somra tract. When the British offered an amnesty in the later part of the war, several of the Kuki chiefs accepted a settlement (Parratt, 2005, p. 43). A campaign led by the General Officer Commanding of Burma and the Political Agent Higgins, assisted by cooperation from Kuki chiefs finally led to the quashing of the uprising in 1919 (ibid). It had been a serious episode, costing some Rs. 28 lakhs and many lives. It had also exposed the inadequacies of the British administration in the hills (ibid). As Reid (1942: 78-82) later acknowledged that, there were genuine grievances and genuine abuses behind the revolt, quite apart from the recruitment issue which is the most common

assumption of the cause of the war (as cited in Parratt, 2005, p. 43). "Very little was known to the public of these operations; one or two Calcutta papers only published short and erroneous accounts of what they wrote of as 'outings of Political Officers and their escorts,' and generally belittling a long, hard 'show' carried through eventually to a successful issue by the combined Military Police forces of Assam and Burma (Shakespeare, 1977, p. 235)."

These operations, known officially as the Kuki Punitive Measures, were entrusted by Government to the control of the General Officer Commanding of Burma, who had under him a large force of Assam Rifles and Burma Military Police.⁷ The Administration Report of the Manipur State for the year 1918-1919 records:

By March 1919, Pachei, the last of the leading Kuki rebel chiefs to surrender, had been placed in Imphal jail. Since the close of the year a tribunal examined the cases of some of the leading Kuki chiefs, who in addition to the Manipur pretender, Chingakhamba Senachaoba Singh, have been removed to Kohima for deportation under Regulation III of 1818. During the Kuki Punitive Measures some 650 guns, mostly unlicensed, were withdrawn from the villages in the Manipur Hills in addition to some 350 guns in the adjoining Somra Tract, where the Kukis, who previously lived in Manipur, had many guns (ibid).

The punitive measures alone could not bring the situation under control without resorting to strong economic measures. In the words of Sir Robert Reid:

Any attempt to bring the enemy to battle and inflict losses on them would have been useless. Instead, economic measures were taken. The rebellion broke out after the Kukis had reaped the harvest in 1917. Columns operating over a wide area prevented them from sowing and reaping a crop in 1918, and by 1919, resistance collapsed owing to the lack of food (Ray, 1990, p. 75).

⁷ Administration Report of the Manipur State for the year 1918-1919

The military operations against the Kuki Chiefs⁸ under General Sir Henry Keary were officially closed on 20th May, 1919. During the military operation, one Kuki chief, Ngulbul of Longya was killed in the battle at Lonpi Fort (Gangte, 2010, p. 76). “The hostile chiefs in Manipur territory were detained under Regulation III of 1918. The armed police of Burma arrested the rebels in Burmese territory after a fierce battle at Molvailup village in Burma. Those arrested from the Burmese territory were dealt with Section 16 of the Chin Hills Regulation, 1896 (Ray, 1990, p. 75).” It took more than 5,000-armed men about two years to suppress the uprising.

Some of the key leaders were deported to the Andamans in 1919 while others were put at hard labour (Downs, 1971, p. 169). According to Downs, the local Nagas were active in the governments’ operations, assisting them by providing intelligence or leading government forces to Kuki encampments. The rebellion did nothing to improve the relations between these two communities (ibid). The conflict had devastating consequences for the social and economic lives of the affected villages, which were burned down several times. Epidemics that broke out during and after the fighting eventually killed more people than the operations themselves had (ibid).

3. 4. 3 Cultural Discontinuities: Waves of Changes

The defeat of the Kukis in the war was more than a defeat of arms. It was a defeat of the old ways of life. One significant result of the uprising was that large number of the Thadou-Kukis began to profess Christianity and move away from their old belief systems. A possible reason could be the fact that Christianity was the religion of their conquerors and thus considered superior to their own (Downs, 1971, p. 169). “Sometimes conditions, as Dr Mc Gavran has pointed out, attending defeat conduced towards acceptance—acceptance of the conqueror’s

⁸ The ten prominent rebel chiefs were, namely—Chengjapao (Chief of Aishan), Khutinhang (Chief of Jampi), Pachei (Chief of Chassad), Pakhang (Chief of Henglep), Tintong (Chief of Laiyong), Semchung (Chief of Ukha), Ngulkhup (Chief of Mombi), Leothang (Chief of Gebok), Heljashon (Chief of Loibol) and Mangkhoon (Chief of Tingkai Mangkhoon).

religion. Equally important, the opening up of better means of communication, properly cut-roads through the forests in various directions also made the evangelistic tours a far less laborious matter (Dena, 1988, p. 48).” Therefore, the Kuki Uprising 1917-1919 was an important landmark in the history of the Thadou-Kukis in two ways. It resulted in changes in the administration of Manipur by British administrators, which for the first time acknowledged the Hill population. It also resulted in the transformation of the socio-cultural life of people due to mass conversion to Christianity. Thus, the anti-colonial movement paved the way for a massive change affecting the very social structure of the society.

3. 5 Spatializing the Missionary Encounter: The Interaction between Missionary Work and Space in Colonial Settings

Colonialism and Christian missions followed each other in North East India, like in other parts of the world. In 1813, the British Parliament removed all restrictions on missionary activities in India. Christian Missions in India began with the passing of Clause XXXII of the Charter Act of 1813 by the British Parliament (Dena, 1988, p. 18). “The Charter contained a provision that persons desirous to go and settle in India for the purpose of introducing religious and moral improvement should apply for permission to the Court of Directors, and if refused by this authority, the application could be transmitted to the Board of Control which was also empowered to grant permission to the missionaries. The same Charter ascertained government protection to each person thus arrived in India (Barkataki, 1985, p. 84).” This encourages the missionary movement to enter the North East India. The advent of Christianity in the North East India can be marked by the Treaty of Yandaboo concluded at the end of the first Anglo-Burman war, between the East India Company and the kingdom of Burma on 24th February 1826 (Downs, 1992, p. 6).

The year 1894 marked the arrival of William Pettigrew in Manipur. Sponsored by the Arthington Aborigines Mission, Pettigrew started his work at Imphal, the

capital of the state on 6 February 1894. Pettigrew not only mastered the Manipuri language, he also reduced it into writing (Singh, 1991, p. 57). Soon after permission was granted to him, Mr. Pettigrew immediately went to Imphal, the Capital of the State, and began his work by opening a school for Manipuri boys (Pettigrew, 1934)⁹. Within Six months, the British authorities who were administering the State on behalf of the Hindus rajah, then a minor, decided against allowing Mission work among the Manipur Hindus of the valley, and Mr. Pettigrew was instead given permission to take up work, 'at his own risk' among the Tangkhul Nagas in the Hills to the northeast of Imphal (ibid).

The risk referred to here is better understood in Pettigrew's own word. He wrote:

To accept either one of the two conditions was the alternative sent us from Shillong a year and half later: Say "Yes" to the proposal of leaving the valley alone, and establishing mission head-quarters among the head hunting Naga tribe called the Tangkhul Nagas in the hills in the north-east corner of the State, bordering on Upper Burma. Say "No" and leave the state for good. This was the ultimatum given to us in November, 1895. It is interesting to note that a few months before this announcement was made, one of the villages of this tribe had been raided and over 140 heads cut off and carried away (Pettigrew, 1932).

At the request of the then Political Agent Colonel Maxwell, Pettigrew headed to the west in Ukhrul in 1895 and made it his first centre. Consequently, the Tangkhul-Nagas in Ukhrul district became the first to accept Christianity in the hills (Singh, 1991, p. 68). When Pettigrew decided to settle and work among the Tangkhul-Nagas, the Arthington Aborigines were no longer in position to support his work. Pettigrew placed his case before the American Baptist Missionary Triennial Conference held at Sibsagar in December 1895 (Sangma, 1987, p. 274). The Assam Mission Records show that the Missionary Union took

⁹ Rev. Jonah M.Solo and Rev. K. Mahangthei compiled the autobiographies, accounts and personal diaries of Pettigrew. The research will make use of these materials to represent the perspectives and experiences of the first missionary William Pettigrew as well as the early missionaries' encounters in Manipur Hills.

over the Manipur field from the Arthington Aborigines Mission on 1st February 1896 (Singh, 1991, p. 68).

During 1910-11, Pettigrew as Superintendent of Census got an opportunity to visit other hill areas of Manipur (Sangma, 1987 (vol.1), p. 277). The Thadou-Kukis were the second tribe to accept Christianity in Manipur. Pettigrew went to a Kuki village called Senvon in the southern hills and requested the chief for permission to work in that place. He was denied the permission. In 1909, apparently having changed his mind, this same chief invited Watkin Roberts of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission at Aizawl to establish a school in his village (Downs, 1971). Though all of Manipur was technically an American Baptists field, the southern hills were far removed from the centres of that Mission's work where the Presbyterian centres in the Mizo Hills were much closer. In 1909 itself, Roberts organized the Indo-Burma Thado Kookie Pioneer Mission for work in that area (ibid). The Senvon church in the southern hills was the first to be established among the Kukis, but the progress was more rapid among the Kukis of the North and North West once work had begun among them (ibid, p. 167). Since, our field areas lies in the North West of Manipur, the thesis will concentrate on the work of the Baptist missionaries' in the region.

Massive conversion to Christianity occurred amongst the Thadou-Kukis only after the defeat of this tribe in the Kuki Rebellion (1917-1919) or the Kuki War of Independence. The first Kuki Baptist church was established at Tujang Vaichong village in 1916, largely through the work of Ngulhao Thomsong (Down, 1971). Crozier and his wife assisted Pettigrew in this mission field. They contributed greatly by opening a leper asylum and translated the scripture into Thadou dialect (ibid).

During the First World War, the British Government in its requirement to raise labour corps from amongst the hill, people were faced with a large-scale rebellion. Certain section of the Kuki tribe (mostly the Thadou-Kukis) rebelled

on the suggestion to provide a second labour corps (Chishti, 2004, p. 10). The organisation and recruitment for the Manipur Labour Corps among the hill tribes was under the charge of Pettigrew (Dena, 1988, pp. 37).

Pettigrew had to study Thadou-Kuki language in order to reach out to them (Dena, 1988, p. 109).¹⁰ According to Missionary Report for 1916, the Thadou-Kuki primers prepared in 1912 were printed in 1913. One significant contribution of the missionaries among the various tribes of Manipur was the translation of the Scriptures. They recognised the need for translation in the dialect of the three most important tribes in Manipur state, viz. the Manipuri, the Tangkhul Naga and the Thadou-Kuki. It had fallen upon Dr. and Mrs. Croziers to master the Thadou-Kuki language and translate the Scriptures into that language (Sangma, 1987 (Vol. 2), p. 243). The natives also contributed not only in preaching the Gospel, but also in the translation work among communities other than their own. For instance, Pakho Sitlhou, a Thadou Christian of this period gave most of his life in service among the Rongmei Nagas. He prepared a hymnal in their language and assisted in the translation of Scripture portions (Downs, 1971, p. 170). The gospel also got propagated by the local people themselves through their interaction with the other neighbouring tribes.

In 1924, the Bible Society published the gospel of John, translated by Ngulhau Thomsong, revised, and prepared for press by William Pettigrew. Under him, the New Testament was printed under the name "Thadou-Kuki" in 1942. The

¹⁰ During his tour of investigations in south-west Manipur, Pettigrew also discovered that in western portion of Manipur, north of the Cachar Road, is inhabited by the Thado (Thadou) branches of the Kuki clan, and the areas south of the Cachar road, although having many Thado (Thadou) clan villages, is to a great extent occupied by different branches of the Lushai and Old Kuki clans. What did strike Pettigrew was the predominance of the Thado (Thadou) language among all these many and varied branches. Even the Kabui Nagas who occupied many villages to the north and south of the Cachar Road, and whose population is estimated at about 6000 persons at that time, use the Thado language in intercourse with other villages. Therefore, Pettigrew was no doubt that the lingua franca for all these branches of Kukis and Lushai who occupy these areas, and whenever Mission work is established in these sections, Thado (Thadou) should be made the medium of instructions for all. Also the Thado (Thadou) literature will not only reach the Thados (Thadous) but all the varied clans that cover the southern and western hills of Manipur (Sangma, 1987, p. 278).

Bible Society of India published a translation of the Old Testament together with a revised New Testament prepared by Tongkhojang Lunkim in 1971. This was the first complete Bible identified as being a “Kuki” version (Go, 1996, p. 81). Besides the early converts and the *Lambus* (interpreters) who helped in translation works, the native clerks, *Chaparasis* and village chiefs were also involved as informants at various points in the codification of customary laws and textualisation of ethnographic works. In fact, they were active participants in the process and acted as an indispensable aide to the missionaries. From the very beginning, the expansion of Christianity has indeed been about such a ‘shared enterprise’. Local people were as much missionaries as were members of the mission societies. They were often the driving force in the work of evangelisation, Bible translation, printing, creating education and health facilities, and building up and providing pastoral care for the community (Visvanathan, 1993, p. 9).

As the missionaries generally were in closer contact with the local population than colonial officials were, studying their spatial practices and strategies offers better potential for analysing the dynamics of intercultural interaction in the colonial setting. Dena had rightly said that the missionary movement was seen as the most effective force of colonisation, not only because it did not use force, but especially as it penetrated more deeply into the life of the people (Dena, 1988, p. 8). The Missionaries aimed at overall changes in the beliefs and actions of native peoples, at colonization of heart and mind as well as body (Beidelman, 1982, p. 6). However, to understand the nature of the influence of the missionary, it is important to understand the location of the missionary within the colonial structure. The influence of the missionary in the colonial policies towards the hill tribes is analysed. This would help us in understanding the location of the missionary within the colonial structure.

3. 6 Colonialism and Christian Mission

The most common dilemma is often whether to look at the Christian missions as a part and parcel of the colonial structure and seek to construe it within that system or whether to look at it as a completely separate entity altogether. Christian mission and colonialism were two movements opposed to each other fundamentally (Dena, 1988, p. 12). William Pettigrew first brought Christianity to Manipur in 1894. Pettigrew's original plan of preaching the Gospel among the plains of Manipur was put to an end by a notification of the Political Agent on 11th December 1894:

Under instructions of the local government I have the honour to inform you that owing to the Manipur state being administered on behalf of the minor Raja, no missionary of any denomination intending to work in the state territory can be admitted into Manipur without the precious sanction of the chief commissioner of Assam.¹¹

According to Singh (1991, p. 61), since most of the Manipuris hold to the tenets of the Hindu religion bordering in fact almost to fanaticism, the Political Agent could easily conceive the trouble, which would arise as soon as the Raja of Manipur was placed in charge of his state on reaching manhood. Pettigrew headed to the west in Ukhrul in 1895 and made it his first centre. The Tangkhul-Nagas in Ukhrul district became the first to accept Christianity in the hills of Manipur (ibid, p. 68). The 'Thadou-Kukis' were the second tribe to accept Christianity in Manipur (Downs, 1971, p. 167). The Manipur Baptist mission field was broadly divided into two areas, the Tangkhul-Nagas (Ukhrul in the North East) where Pettigrew had worked for about twenty-five years and the Kukis of western hills, where Pettigrew began work just before the war, though at that time not yet permitted to tour in that section (Crozier, in Zeliang, 2005).

¹¹ Notification no. 806, dated Manipur the 11th December 1894, addressed to Rev. W. Pettigrew, Missionary, Manipur as documented in, K. M Singh, 1991

Although the relation between the colonial administrator and missionaries started off on a bad note, it gradually changed as situations compelled them to interact and depend on each other. The state government appointed William Pettigrew, the American Baptist Missionary, as superintendent of the census of the hill tribes (1910-1911). This was because the missionary was the only man who knew the language of the hill tribes. The census work definitely enabled the missionary and his native workers to explore more areas hitherto unvisited.¹² Thus, the missionary was ready to cooperate with the government if he was convinced that its policy was of benefit to the people and for his mission.

During the First World War, the British Government in its requirement to raise labour corps from amongst the Hill people were faced with a large scale rebellion. The aggression which came to be known as the 'Kuki Rebellion'¹³ (1917-1919) lasted for two years before the chiefs surrendered and the strife ceased. For the period of the war, Pettigrew was active in recruiting Labour Corps for France. It was because of Pettigrew's war service that the government gave him permission for a second Missionary family to work in Manipur. Earlier government stipulation was that only two missionaries were allowed in the entire state to care for the two vast fields of Ukhrul and Kangpokpi (Zeliang, 2005, pp. 6-67).¹⁴ Consequently, Crozier was allowed to assist Pettigrew in his mission work as a full time missionary (Downs, 1971, p. 160). Manipur, under the American Baptist, was divided into two 'spheres of influence'. Pettigrew supervised the North East and Sadar regions (the area North of Imphal up to the Nagaland border) and Crozier, the North West (ibid, p. 158).

The inter connection between them was more in the nature of highly temporary process solely determined by the principle of expediency (Dena, 1988, p. 12). The

¹² Minutes of the ABMC, 10th Session held in December 18-29, 1886, Gauhati, 1992, p. 81

¹³ This war was significant in two ways:--there was large-scale conversion to Christianity among the Thadou-Kukis after their defeat and various land acts was introduced to curtail the land rights of the hill people.

¹⁴ Reports by Rev. J.S. Anderson, CBCNEI, 1954-55, as compiled by Elungkiebe Zeliang, 2005

relationship between the administrators and the missionary was cordial as long as the other did not affect the functioning of the other or, in cases when one can act as a means to the other's end. However, when the missionary enterprises become a threat to political stability, the government was not hesitant to curtail it. In the same way, the missionaries go along with the administrators as long as it served their evangelistic fervour.

3. 7 Quotidian Contestations: The Missionary and Local agencies

3. 7. 1 Re-ordering of Spatial arrangement of Land

During the years of the Kuki Rebellion, Crozier had served as a government medical officer. In appreciation for the services rendered, the Mission was finally given permission to purchase land for a new centre at Kangpokpi on the Imphal-Kohima road (Downs, 1971, p. 160). In the year 1920, the state had granted for the mission 212 acres of land for the Kangpokpi mission station and another 18 acres a quarter of mile away for a leper colony (Zeliang, 2005, pp. 58-62). After the Maharajah had given his consent, the clearing of the site and building began at Kangpokpi under the supervision of Mr. Seilut Singson, a Thadou-Kuki convert (Vaiphei, 1979, p. 58). The site was divided to accommodate an educational institution, roadside dispensary, a cemetery, a hospital and ladies' compound (Zeliang, 2005).

The work among this tribe commenced in 1912 and resulted in a large number of baptisms in 1914. The massive conversion to Christianity occurred only after the defeat of this tribe in the Kuki Rebellion (1917-1919) or the Kuki War of Independence (Downs, 1971). Moreover, annual fund of Rs. 45,000 was sanctioned for the development of the Hills, but this facility lasted until only 1939-1940. The Government of India approved measures for the proper administration of the Hills, i.e., the opening up of roads and bridle paths; the extension of education among the tribes; and the bringing of medical reliefs within the reach of the people of the Hills (Reid, 1997, p. 83). Therefore,

missionaries through the funds allocated by the government did massive changes in terms of conversion as well as developmental works. It is not surprising that optimum impact of the missionary movement took place during these years.

In the initial days of missionary work amongst the Thadou-Kukis, the new converts or aspiring Christians had to travel from far to meet the missionaries. New centres for Christian missionary work were formed in different parts of Manipur:

According to the Missionary report for 1917, in Manipur, the centres of Christian work were located in three places. The most northern was at Tujang Vaichong, a wholly Christian village of 24 houses with a community of about 100 persons. The church was organised in 1916, and the existing membership was 86. Ngulhao, the evangelist looked after the interest of this community. At Christmas time, 83 of them travelled from their village to meet the Missionaries at the rest-house at Karong on a cart road. For three days there was happy fellowship with them and their conduct at the various services held, and their memorizing of hymns sung in hearty unison and to tune, made the Missionaries glad. Owing to restrictions, all these western Kukis (Thadou-Kukis) had to meet the Missionary far from their villages, and the absence of accommodation for them, and the necessity for worship to be held in the open air, made it difficult for all (Sangma, 1987, pp. 280-281).

Church planting was done at a rapid rate as a part of the missionary's project. Whenever there were converts in a village, the Christian church in a nearby village sends a teacher to organize a church (Vaiphei, 1979, p. 57). Initiatives were also taken up by local Christians themselves to erect permanent church buildings in the villages. Cash crops like cotton, linseed and paddy were grown and the sale proceeds raised funds for building purposes (Sangma, 1987, p. 284).

The Thadou-Kukis were receptive of education even before a mission station was established in their area. The Ukhrul Field Report for 1916 recorded that of the 87 boys in the Ukhrul station school, 36 of these were Kuki young men from the

western hills (Zeliang, 2005, p. 48).¹⁵ This must have encouraged Pettigrew to set up a mission station among them as soon as he got the chance to do so. In the educational report for 1921, Crozier wrote that the Kangpokpi station school was started on December 9, 1919, with boys and girls just 32 days after they set the site (Zeliang, 2005).¹⁶ “The field report in the North-West of Manipur said that the state had ten schools in these areas and the Mission seven, two of the latter being Night schools. They had about 80 boys and 40 girls (Sangma, 1987, p. 239).”

The girls’ school at Kangpokpi continued during 1927. This was under the supervision of Mrs. Pettigrew. Despite the lack of enthusiasm from among the Christian parents and they preferred to keep young girls at home for housework and fieldwork (ibid). In 1935, under the Missionary Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Tanquist, there were 35 schools, besides the Mission Middle English School in Kangpokpi with a total enrolment of 191, of whom 130 were girls. The government Mission educational grant to school outside Kangpokpi was entirely withdrawn from 1st January 1940 (ibid, p. 240). The statistics for 1950 show the Kangpokpi field as having 234 churches, 1295 baptisms and a total church membership of 10,725. There were 124 primary schools and one Middle English school (Zeliang, 2005).¹⁷ All schools except the one in the main mission centre is entirely self-supporting. The mission school was accepted with positive response from the local population.

Thus, the Missionaries introduced a completely novel way of arrangement of land and spatial order. They introduced the system of division of place and institution according to the function it could provide. There was re-organisation of land and society through the implantation of Church and the establishment of mission fields. The whole of Manipur was divided into three mission

¹⁵ ABMC of the ABFMS, 1916, pp. 45-48, as compiled by Elungkiebe Zeliang, 2005

¹⁶ Crozier, Educational Report for 1921, as compiled by Elungkiebe Zeliang, 2005

¹⁷ Brock, E.E., CBCA, Kangpokpi Field Report for 1951-1952, as compiled by Elungkiebe Zeliang, 2005

associations—North-West, North-East and Central called Sadar (Sangma, 1987, p. 290). The mission compound had both educational and health-care amenities available, besides the Church. People moved closer towards mission centres and built their homes and villages around it. The converts were part of the paternalistic economy that developed around the Missionary and the Mission station. Education gave an alternative means of livelihood other than agriculture through the jobs provided by the mission stations, which diminished the dependency and pressure on land. Land was no longer the only determinant of one's status or the only means of livelihood in the village.

3. 7. 2 Gender relationships within the Colonial Setting: Impact of the Missionary Compound

In comparison to her counterparts in the Indian mainland, the tribal women enjoy a comparatively privileged position. Yet, on the other hand, there is strong evidence of gender-specific cultural practices that undermine this apparent equality. According to Mangkhosat Kipgen, in the social organisation and village administration women had no place except under special circumstances where the widow of a deceased chief might rule over the village on behalf of her minor son until his maturity. The society was male dominated. The women's domain was considered the home. In community matters, women were not consulted—and if they volunteered their opinions were not given weight (Kipgen, 1997).

Chapman and Clark wrote about the widening gap between man and woman in tribal societies with the introduction of education when it was confined only to the men. They wrote:

As the schools opened the minds of the men and boys to new ideas, the gap between them and the women widened; Christianity, as it was actually being practiced, increased the differences in the status of the sexes instead of diminishing it (Chapman et al, 1968, p. 5).

A secretary of the missionary society visiting the district realised that the Church could not developed on sound lines until women were given their rightful place in it (ibid, p. 5).

Though there is not much record on the activities of women in the early Christianity, women were equally proportionate in number among the first baptized Christians along with man.¹⁸ Though the mission school in Kangpokpi was not very successful in terms of education for the women section, it did change in the participation of women in public sphere of community life through church and mission activities. Earlier, even Christian parents preferred that the girls should be at home to tend to household chores and to work in the field. However, woman emancipation was nowhere close to the battling of the Zenana¹⁹ system by missionaries. According to Mrs. Pettigrew, lack of sympathy, lack of funds, and lack of trained woman missionaries for girls work at Kangpokpi, was in a great measure responsible for the mission's lack of success in female education in Manipur (Sangma, 1987, p. 239).

The organisation of Christianity gave them a space, which was not provided to them by the traditional and customary village administration. In the report of Mrs. Alice Pettigrew, wife of Mr. Pettigrew, she wrote about how the revival meetings in Kangpokpi had caused much unrest among a band of girls. The young maidens in certain sections of hills had formed themselves into parties, and visited neighbouring villages to preach and to teach (as documented in Zeliang, 2005, p. 96).²⁰ In 1923, there were a number of Christian widows and their children of about tens or more who had been living in the Kangpokpi

¹⁸ Alun K. Haolai, Kuki Baptist Convention's Diary, vol.I (1948-1993)

¹⁹ Zenana Mission is an evangelical movement conceived and organised in Britain with the objective of proselytizing the Bengalis and Indians. The imperial design was to win over the womenfolk culturally and finally religiously, by giving them western education at home. It was planned that women missionary teachers ought to visit the 'native' Zenana and gave them vernacular and English education so as to enable them to question the validity of heathen belief and social practices.

²⁰ Mrs. Alice Pettigrew, Women's Work Report for 1923, as compiled by Zeliang, 2005, p. 96

compound under the charge of Mrs. Crozier (*ibid*, 97). These women and their children became influential personas in the society.

Women groups had started as early as the 1921 as per the Evangelistic Report given by Dr. G.G. Crozier. The women group of the largest Kuki village was supporting an evangelist-teacher in a village in another area which was closed against the mission (*ibid*, p. 75).²¹ In 1940, some women preached the gospel in the non-Christian villages in Assam.²² All churches today have a separate fellowship for the women known as the women society department. This seems to be the only space in the society where women group exercises an independent role unchallenged and without being subjected to ridicule. They have their own president, secretary, board of members as well as their own aims and objectives.²³ Nevertheless, there is a hierarchy inside the church in which the women are not allowed in certain area, which were strictly the domain of the men section. Education changes the very structure of the society by changing the status of women. The education of girls contradicts the stereotypical role of women in the tribal society. It was a role that saw them as the centre of domestic life, but not in fact active participants in the kinds of decision-making positions and processes that education encourages of those who receive it.

3: 7: 3 Chieftainship and Colonial Missionary

The Missionary enterprise was received with mixed response from the Thadou-Kuki chiefs. Some chiefs sensed it as a threat to their space or domain of territory and authority that they had thought to be exclusively their own. The advent of colonialism and introduction of Christianity undermined the authority of the chief largely. The chief had to share his rights to authority with the colonial administrator and the missionary. Many chiefs also had serious issues against the new religion, which they felt was a threat to the village community life and

²¹ G.G. Crozier, *Evangelistic Report for 1921*, CBCNEI, as compiled by Zeliang, 2005, p. 75

²² Alun K. Haolai, *Kuki Baptist Convention's Diary*, vol.I (1948-1993)

²³ *Records of the women's society*, 2004

besides his influence. Christianity was considered as the white man's religion. With this comes the pre-conceived notion that the white man who preached was no different from the white men who rule. Subsequently, some groups of chiefs were involved in persecuting the early converts, who were beaten, tortured and driven out of their villages (Downs, 1971, p. 181).

According to Padel, the missionary church built a system of authority, which contradicted and deferred fundamentally from traditional (Kond) authority. The church undermined the chief's authority in many areas (Padel, 1995, p. 235). "Missionary therefore created a new kind of community superimposed on the old village and clan-based community (ibid, p. 236)." When the new Christian convert refused to participate in the old ways of life like raids, their reluctance to do so made them the object of persecution. The degree of persecution they suffered was extreme. In many instances, they lost everything (ibid, pp. 235-236). Persecution occurred in different ways in different places. However, there was one thing that was common. The preaching of the Gospel was regarded as an encroachment to the age-old customs and religion (Vaiphei, 1986, p. 68).

In Manipur, until 1923, the chiefs and elders in all areas were up in arms against the mission work more intensely than ever.²⁴ Some Thadou-Kuki chiefs vehemently opposed their people from going to schools because they were suspicious of the Missionaries education system as a cover for proselytisation.²⁵ Every village under chieftainship system has a day for community work in the village. The village chiefs intentionally set the day of community on a sunday because he knew that sunday was the day of worship for the Christians. The villagers who fail to abide by it were expelled from the village (Vaiphei, 1979, p. 68). There were instances in which the Sub Divisional Officer sides with the

²⁴ A report by William Pettigrew, Evangelistic Report for 1923, p. 88

²⁵ Singsit, Douthang, Keithel Manbi Village, Senapati District, Manipur, Interviewed on 5th September, 2006 (during pilot survey)

village Chief and elders in ordering the Christians to leave the village within a week, forfeiting all their belongings (ibid, 69). Prim Suantak Vaiphei narrates his own experiences, "...when we first constructed our church building in my village, the chief came inside the church one day while we had our service and he scolded my father calling him dirty names. He kicked the wall, the post and said, 'these wood posts, this thatch, these wood (benches) are from my land, from my forest'(ibid)".

However, if a missionary is able to convert a chief, it is a great advantage. If an influential chief has professed conversion, many will follow him. Pettigrew says, "...the fact of the Thados (Thadous) having a chief in each village with absolute authority is a great advantage, compared to the democratic Nagas, where everyone has his say in matters that come before the village courts" (as cited in Sangma, 1987, p. 278). So, on the other end were a group of chiefs who were enthusiastic about the new religion and enterprises of the missionaries. At the Nowgong conference of 1916, William Pettigrew narrated a story of an influential Thadou chief asking for Pettigrew's presence at his village of Shangnao, and of the gift by him of a cornelian stone, which denoted an act of friendship and the appeal for help. In the writings of Pettigrew, "the authorities at that time opposed our visiting the North-West area, and so we were not be able to respond to his call. The beginning of this year saw us there for the first time. The chief died a few years back, but his wife is acting as the Chieftess, and she was anxious to carry out her late husband's wish for the Christian teaching, and on her request being made to and granted by the S.D.O, we opened a school there last april."²⁶ The oppositions by the Chiefs and elders continued with great intensity till 1925, but in the next year, such oppositions have died down and the non-converts started enquiring about the new religion (Sangma, 1987, p. 282). On a holistic aspect, there was a change in the power structure of the villages.

²⁶ Pettigrew, Evangelistic Report for 1923, compiled by Zeliang Elungkiebe, 2005

3. 8 Colonialism and Identity Transformation

3. 8.1 Reflections on Colonial Writings

Colonisers and Missionaries were among the first outsiders to make sustained contact with the Thadou-Kukis, the encounter and experiences of which had a lasting impact on the cultural identity of the people. The missionaries like Rev. William Pettigrew and Mrs. Alice Goreham Pettigrew, Dr. Galen George Crozier and Mrs. Mabel Borsworth Crozier, the Rev. & Mrs. M.M. Fox. Dr.& Mrs. Werelius, Dr. & Mrs. E.E. Brock, Dr. & Mrs. J.A. Ahlquist, Dr. & Mrs. J. S. Anderson assisted by the local missionaries had attained a standard of competence in the local language (MBC, 1997, p. 26). The British administrators who wrote on the society were -John Macrae 1801 (1801), B.C. Allen, R. Brown (1874), Edward Tuite Dalton, 1872, Captain E.W. Dun 1892/ 1886, Robert Reid, Colonel L.W. Shakespear 1977 (1929), Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear 1975 (1912), William Shaw (1929), C.A. Soppitt 1976 (1893), Lieut R. Stewart (1855), Surg. Lieut. Col. A.S. Reid, J.E. Webster, Lieut. R. Stewart (1855 &1856) and others.

Their writings frequently contain accounts of local culture and society, oral tradition etc., which, whatever their deficiencies, have an indispensable documentary value precisely for standing right at the beginning of modern cultural change (Peel in Bickers et al, 1996, p. 71). These writings were important because they were the pioneer medium through which 'little communities' like the Thadou society, unknown to the literary world became associated with a more established 'great tradition' of the European society. The oral tradition was supplanted, but the missionary's and colonial ethnographer's records became the reservoir for saving proverbs, oral verses, folktales and vernacular language that had every possibility of becoming extinct. J. Shakespear's (1975/1912) "*The Lushei Kuki Clans*," and William Shaw's (1929) "*Notes on the Thadou Kukis*," contains rich record of folklores. Documentation of linguistic and grammar usages were also made by C. A. Soppitt (1976/ 1893) in "*A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes*," and Lieut R. Stewart (1856) in "*A Slight notice of the grammar*

of the Thadou or new Kookie language." Moreover, these missionary's histories and accounts are still shaping the views of academicians and social scientist (Sitlhou, 2006, p. 16) who refer to them as primary materials in their construction of the history of the Thadou-Kukis.

In readings of colonial ethnography, in whatever form, we find that the discourse of colonialism is frequently populated with terrifying stereotypes on the natives as 'savages', 'wild', 'untameable' and 'heathen tribe'. Coincidentally, the most common reason for British annexation of a hill tribe, be it Nagas, Garos, Mizos or Kukis was to stop them from raiding the plains or their stations. "Indeed, it was in order to prevent such practices spilling over into the British territories on the plains that the "forward policy" of annexing the hill areas had been adopted (Downs, 1994, p. 172)."

For many of the tribes, especially the Naga and to a lesser extent the Kuki tribes, head-hunting was not simply a matter of taking trophies in war. Heads were often taken in ambush, with those of women and children being especially prized because they proved the cleverness and daring of the ambusher in penetrating the inner defences of the enemy. The taking of heads was essential to the image of manhood (certain types of clothing and bodily ornaments could only be worn by men who had taken a head, and the more eligible young ladies would refuse to marry a man who had not) and was a necessary part of certain ceremonies that ensured the welfare of a family or village and the fertility of the fields. The principal role of the men, and the basic social institutions of the village were closely related to raiding and head-hunting (ibid)."

The Thadou-Kukis believed in the existence of an evil spirit by the name '*Kulsamnu*' who resides in the path leading to the abode of the deaths. She sits along the roadside, seizes all poor wandering souls, and troubles them unless their relatives who had died before come to their rescue. *Kulsamnu* dare not detain spirits of those who have slain men and beasts (Shakespeare, 1975, p. 199).

This belief also encourages the practice of headhunting. The early narratives of British expansion in North East India (Mackenzie, 1884, p. 7) were replete with reference to the numerous savage and warlike tribes that frequently raided the plains of Assam for slaves and booty. Many writers used the term 'rebels' or 'recalcitrant tribes' to describe the Kukis' position during the Kuki Uprising 1917-1919.

A common feature in colonial ethnographies is that they beset with accounts and descriptions of the missionaries' encounter with a hostile tribe; the oppositions they faced initially, but how despite the odds, they were eventually able to triumph over them. In the process, the native contribution or role in the success of their endeavour either have been overlook or undermined (Sitlhou, 2006, 136). The role of the native agency is not difficult to imagine in a region like Manipur, which is characterised by linguistic and cultural diversity. "Colonial missionary activity was acutely dependent upon the native catechist. He supported the missionary in the work of evangelization, of pastoral engagements and involvements, in education work as native teacher or master, in medical work as doctor and dresser, as translator and colporteur, and of course in Zenana work, as native Bible woman, teacher and visitor (Visvanathan, 1993, p. 9)."

Douthang Singsit, an old man in his mid nineties belonging to the Thadou clan of the Kukis, narrates his experiences with the pioneer missionaries. 'The missionaries,' he says, 'busied themselves with the translation works, the administration, the medical work and education system, so much so that they hardly had time to conduct the groundwork of pastoring the local convert. Therefore, it was the local pioneer pastors like Ngulhao thomsong and Pakho Sitlhou who had intimate contact with the people and did the work of shepherding the converts.'²⁷

²⁷ Singsit, Douthang, Keithel Manbi Village, Senapati District, Manipur, Interviewed on 5th September, 2006 (during pilot survey).

Today, the colonial spectre continues to haunt the present day intellectual consciousness though the colonisers and missionaries departed the region many years ago. Ashis Nandy (1998) has discussed at length the damaging impact of colonialism on the subject people. He continued that 'colonialism' is a psychological state rooted in earlier forms of social consciousness in both the coloniser and colonised. A form of re-colonisation is evident in literatures written by the local inhabitants who continue to reproduce the derogatory description given by the colonial ethnographies while narrating their history. These writings directly refer to colonial ethnographies or make an interpretative analytical version of their own based on earlier writings. Ro Pakhuongte writes, "When we look back, our ancestors were heathens. What we have seen is a sudden change from darkness to light" (as cited in Jeyaseelan, 1999). The local people have internalised the colonial ruler's description in this case. Therefore, though the local agencies have started writing today, it is a perspective or a sense of reality seen through the lens of the colonisers.

3. 8. 2 Standardisation of Language

The time tested oral tradition of the Thadou-Kukis found another medium of expression in the form of the written and the printed word. The Gutenberg Revolution entered the region through as a part of the missionaries' project to make the Bible intelligible to the local populations. The Protestant missions place such emphasis upon creating a written language because they believe that the availability of vernacular translation would make it possible for them to lay emphasis on the use of mother tongue in both worship and the reading of the Bible (Downs, 1992, p. 191). It has been estimated that Christians created written forms of their language for as many as fifty tribes in North East (ibid).

Though the Garos of Meghalaya had numerous dialectical groups, they lived in a compact geographical area, and had only one mission working among them. A

standard language based on one of the dialects (*Awe*²⁸) was created which became the language of scripture translation and of the educated members of the entire tribe. These have been indirectly refuted in the case of the Kuki community of Manipur, as propounded by a local thinker Khup Za Go. For him, Bible translation has become a starting point for the emergence of dialectical identity and widening of the gap of ethnic divides among the various Scheduled Tribes of Manipur (Go, 1996).

Jusho observes that a factor for the fragmentation of the Kuki group of tribes has been the publishing of the Holy Bible in 1960, in Thadou dialect. Being the majority tribe and one of the most progressive tribes among the Kukis, the version of the Bible in Thadou dialect was designated as the "Kuki Bible." Other Kuki tribes like the Paites, Gangtes, Vaipheis, Zous and other tribes sternly objected this, as they were not happy to call the Bible as Kuki Bible, because it was written only in Thadou dialect. They therefore, insisted the Bible be referred to as the "Thadou Bible" rather than adding "Kuki" appellation. However, the Thadou being the dominant tribe were adamant to change and they preferred it to be referred as the 'Kuki Bible' or the "Thadou Kuki Bible." Consequently, the resentment over the designation of the Bible became more pronounced after the other tribes brought out their own language versions of the Bible (Jusho, 2004. pp. 39-40). Thus, we see from our analysis a two differing effect of the missionary contribution in translation and to the standardisation of languages.

²⁸ The dialect used on the north side of the Garo hills.

3. 8. 3 Opposing Categories and the Construction of the 'other'

A respondent narrates the accounts of Ngulhao Thomsong's²⁹ visit to London:

Being a man of short stature, the Englishmen were unsure as to whether he could reach the podium of the Church where he was invited to speak. Some men lift him up so that the whole congregation could see him. As he looked up from the podium, he could see thousands of white faces, all waiting to hear him speak. There was pin drop silence all around. He was for them, the living evidence of the missionaries' 'fruits of labour'. The pastor for the Londoners was like a specimen of the condition of the people in the missionaries' field. The respondent recalls that he and many of his friends went eagerly to listen to Ngulhao's narration of his visit to the great and distant country rather than the gospel sermon delivered by him.³⁰

The narrations shows how both the coloniser and the local people were both awed by the presence of the 'other', and how the difference between them was a subject of curiosity to both. In some instances, the missionaries were humiliated and they were laughed at because they had blue eyes and hairy bodies, which the local people thought look like those of animals (Jeyaseelan, 1999, p. 80).

"The discovery of the New World in the sixteenth century dramatically presented the British and the Europeans with the problem of cultural discontinuity (Savyasaachi, 2001, p. 80)." This sense of discontinuity was introduced in India with the British colonial rule. The forest-dwellers in India were compared to the aborigines in Australia, Africa and the Pacific islands and were described as 'backward', 'primitive' and 'uncivilized' tribal people. After

²⁹ Ngulhao Thomsong is one of the pioneering native pastor amongst the Thadou-Kukis. It was under his pastor ship that the first Kuki church was built in Tujang Vaichong in 1916. He also contributed greatly in the translation of the Bible in the Thadou dialect. He translated the gospel of John (Go, 1996).

³⁰ Singsit, Douthang, Keithel Manbi Village, Senapati District, Manipur, Interviewed on 5th September, 2006 (during pilot survey).

India's independence, this colonial understanding continued. Nehru's 'Panchsheel' was formulated around this understanding (ibid). "These discontinuities have been arranged and understood in the framework of linear historical development and in conformity with the normative order of industrial production. Accordingly, social formations progress from simple to complex, primitive to modern, savage to civilized, and irrational to rational (ibid)." The notion of the centre and the frontiers, dominant, mainstream versus the marginal, or peripheral developed on account of colonialism (ibid).

For Levi-Strauss, the cultural forms typically take the form of combinations of opposite qualities called binary oppositions—e.g. raw and cooked (Levi-Strauss, 1970). In early texts such as "Of Grammatology," Derrida suggests that the whole of Western thought since Plato and Aristotle is structured in terms of binary oppositions. This means that the Western tradition (philosophy, art, literature, culture, and so on) tends to divide conceptual materials into categories of binary terms (e.g. men, women; black, white; voice, silence; speech, writing etc.) (Derrida, 1976).

The colonial missionary degree of contact with the local people was on a day-to-day basis. "The cultural background of missionaries influences their behaviour in ways not necessarily determined by their Christian beliefs and work, and it also relates to the broader colonial milieu in which these missionaries function (Beidelman, 1982, p. 9)." Thus, they contribute more on issues regarding the clash or dialogue between Christian and tribal morality.³¹ Early Christian missionaries in their zeal to preach the gospel often labelled the tribal customs as pagan and sinful. The same accusation was heap upon cultural dances, songs, folklores... (Jeyaseelan, 1999, p. 88). What the missionary does not allow the

³¹ Some people see religion as a limited set of personal beliefs about God and worship which should be isolated from a person's general culture and can be changed without necessarily upsetting that person's culture and world-view. Others see it as an affair of the community so intimately bound up with its way of life that a change of religion necessarily involves a change of culture and the development of a new conscience (Sitlhou, 2006, p. 19).

native to continue reflects his attitude towards the custom of the local people. The missionaries demand the converts to reject cultural forms in no way opposed to Christian tenets: traditional dress, grooming, music, diet, and naming (ibid, p. 11). This could be attributed to the insecurities of the missionaries that the people, still immature in faith, would be tempted to turn back to their old religion.

The problem has, for South India, been addressed by Dennis Hudson (cited in Visvanathan, 1993). Hudson accounts the complex web of caste networks that ramify a convert's experience of social life: how may a native Christian convert continue to live as a Christian amongst his own people, and how do they distinguish between the social and the religious (ibid, pp. 13-14)? The engagement to Christianity often requires that the converts be in denial of their former world and worldview in order to conform to the colonizer's understanding of the world.

Stephen Neill, speaking about another context said that almost from the start it became the custom of the missionaries to gather into Christian villages those who could be brought under instruction (Neill, 1966, 61). "With the nomadic habits of some people, the constant internecine wars, and the moral degeneracy of which almost all the missionaries complained, it seemed unlikely that any Indian would rise to a high level of Christian achievement unless he could be bought and kept within the sound of the church bell. It was this method, which made possible one of the most remarkable, the longest-lived, and outwardly the most successful of all the experiments in paternalistic and benevolent colonialism of which was recorded anywhere in the world (ibid)." These Christian villages, which were formed with the sole purpose of maintaining Christian discipline, came to be known as "reduction" (ibid) was also built in some areas of the Manipur field.

Within this reduction, the missionary had to be the architect, builder, farmer, lawgiver, doctor, ruler, as well as spiritual guide and leader (ibid, p. 62). The new converts were made to stay close together with a church close by either to avert persecution by the others or to protect them from going to their old ways of lives. The principle of inclusion and exclusion also exist in social structure. Some sections of the people like those born out-of-wedlock or *Kho-Lai-Cha* or *Leitolchapa* meaning 'children of the community', those involved in deviant activities like theft or murder, those who were said to have come from a descent that has been possessed by evil spirits called *Kao-Se* and those who were extremely poor or widowed were look down upon. They were not always outwardly stigmatised, but were rejected on issues like marriage and leadership roles in the society.³² Christianity reduced these demarcations with its teachings and education imparted to the local people, but the new religion brought in its own principles of inclusion and exclusion by the creation of believer and non-believer. It seemed as if 'banishment from village' was merely change to 'excommunication from church'.

The clear separation between spiritual and temporal domains often organizes protestant theology (Dube, 2004, p. 62). Sometimes, the regulations and institutions governing the community show marked continuities with traditional structure. A number of chiefs, mostly nominal Christians, extend their power even to the administration of the church government, which leads the church to involve itself in undesirable politics. This is similar to the case of Bisrampur in Jharkhand where for almost sixty years the missionary had been the pastor and malguzar, and master of the mission station (ibid). Dube explains this phenomenon by stating that, "the distinction between the two phenomena has been lost in the evangelists' practice. Further, he notes that this blurring of the

³² Singsit, Douthang, Keithelmanbi Village (Senapati District, Manipur), interviewed on 5th september, 2006 (during my pilot survey) [He spoke about one of the pioneer local missionary Pakho Sitlhou who was an illegitimate child and was denied his rightful share of inheritance in the family. He was brought up and educated in the mission compound. He became an indispensable aid to the missionaries as mediator, evangelist and translation works.]

spiritual and the temporal domains fit well with the political sociology of the converts, which rests on close connection between ritual and power (ibid, p. 62)". In most Thadou Kuki villages, the Chief usually have important place in the church administration of the village in which he belongs except in cases when there are more than one churches and the chief is not a member to the church; or in cases in which the chief himself decline the post of church leadership.³³

3. 9 Conclusions: End-Results of the Cross-cultural Encounter

In the chapter we see colonialism changing both 'geographical territory' and 'cultural territory' resulting in both re-organisation of land relations and ideological and cultural reconstitution of the culture. The colonial administrators and the missionary were equally effective in restructuring space and society. Whereas the former was influential at a holistic and policymaking level, the influence of the latter in lieu of their day-to-day interaction with local inhabitants was significant. Studying the missionary's influence offer a better potential for analysing the dynamics of intercultural relations in the colonial setting. There was re-organisation of land and society through the implantation of Church and the establishment of mission fields. Both the stipulations of evangelical Christianity and the terms of colonial law contributed in undoing the hierarchies of village life.

The greatest impact of colonialism on the society was that they were coerced to a sedentarised mode of existence. The relation between the coloniser and colonised is characterised by ambivalence. The local natives constituted both a useful ally and a competent opponent for the Britishers at different points of time. The administration before the anti-colonial war was however indifferent to the cause and needs of the Hill population. There was never any representative from the hill areas of Manipur. Though the amendments made in the administration after

³³ Based on my observation and discussion with village elders during the course of the fieldwork

the war was made with the aim of curtailing the liberties of the hill people, it actually recognised their existence as equal proprietors of a defined territory.

The colonial discourse experience is both heterogenetic and orthogenetic process of change. It can be termed heterogenetic because it is a change, which is externally influenced, but also orthogenetic, because the inter-cultural relations also induced the creative urge of the local inhabitants. Following McKim Marriott's theory of 'parochialization', this is a case in which elements from the 'great tradition' becomes confine to particular local 'little traditions' (Marriot, 1967). However, it goes beyond Marriot's theory in that Christianity, as brought forth by the American Baptist Missionaries, is also adjusted to the culture of the society under study. Therefore, identity as Malkki had said, "...is always mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories, et cetera (Malkki, 1992, p. 37)."

CHAPTER 4

Land Rights Discourses in the Hills of Manipur

4.1 Introduction

The Concept of land and land rights for the Hill Tribes of Manipur started as a collective enterprises. The British colonial administration formed land related laws created as a merger between the newly introduced British law and the traditional system (Sarkar, 2006). This trend of governance based on an alien mode of administration has continued in the postcolonial era in the Indian Government policies towards the hill tribes. The paper attempts to highlight the complexities in land relations as well as in the social life of the people due to the imposition of an administration, which do not really understand the existential reality of the ruled. Its irrelevance and insensitivity makes it undesirable to the local people. However, the fact that they are laws issued by a mightier authority makes it a dominant power. Therefore, the realities in most villages today are the side-by-side existence of traditional laws and government laws.

It will revisit the concepts like 'development', 'democracy,' and 'citizenship' by trying to understand its relevance to the hill tribes of Manipur. What is the concept of land rights based on their customary belief? What is the concept of land rights according to the state? How has the two varied concept collide over the years? What impact do they have on the Kukis concept of land rights?

In analysing land rights discourses in the Hills of Manipur, we use the two existing discourses put forward by Bonny Ibhawoh (2007)—legitimising and oppositional rights discourses. In the postcolonial era, there is a shift in matters of land rights and distribution of land as to whom it legitimately belongs to or the concept of "legitimate ownership". Legitimizing discourses is deployed to justify and legitimize both the colonial and the Indian State's economic and social policies. It explains the various moves of the Indian State in trying to integrate the tribals to the mainstream in the name of the nation-building agenda of the

country. As the dominant regime sought to consolidate its control over local resources and social life, sustained challenges emerged from the locale. The present days laws are a continuation to those in the Colonial period. Colonial land policies, which restricted individual access to land and vested it in the state, were attacked as a denial of the local people's to their rightful inheritances. The oppositional right discourse is anti-establishment and is manifested in various movements against the activities of the state agencies.

4. 2 The Land Question

4. 2. 1 Chieftainship System: Land, Role Relationships and its Obligations and Privileges

In theory of authority Max Weber in, 'Economy and Society,' put forward three types of legitimate domination: Charismatic domination, Traditional domination and Rational-legal domination (Weber, 1978). Each of these types of domination gives rise to a corresponding form of legitimacy, types of obedience, administrative apparatus and mode of exercising power (Morrison, 1995, p. 284). Charismatic domination is the type in which the leaders are believed to have capabilities above those of ordinary individuals, and their powers are regarded as having a divine origin, and based on this the individual is treated as a leader (ibid). The administrative staff of a charismatic leader does not consist of 'officials,' and least of all are its members technically trained (Weber, 1978, p. 243).

Authority is traditional when its legitimacy is based on tradition and custom, on the sanctity of age-old rules and powers (ibid, p. 226). In rational-legal domination, legitimacy rests on 'rational grounds' and on the belief in the inherent legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under these rules to issue commands (ibid, p. 215). In the light of these analyses, the chieftainship system amongst the Thadou-Kukis can be characterised as a closed type of traditional authority structure.

The Chieftainship system is weaved around the concept of privileges and obligations of both the chief towards the subjects and vice versa. The Kuki chiefs have the responsibility for care of public order and representation of the body politic. The obligations of citizenship include obedience to the law of the land and payment of tributes called '*changseo*' or basketful of paddy to the chief. Obligation that bind individuals to leaders is by personal loyalties derives from the traditional status of the ruler (Morrison, 1995, p. 288). The right of citizenship includes care in sickness and old age; assistance in time of famine and disaster; protection by the courts of life, land and property (Firth, 1959, p. 254).

Land ownership is the exclusive right and prerogative of the chief. Land and land title system of the Thadou-Kukis supports the basis of legitimacy to the authority of the chiefs (Ray, 1990, p. 44). In the past, the people believed that these chiefs originally had connexion with the gods themselves, their persons was therefore, looked upon with the greatest respect and almost superstitious veneration, and their commands were in every case law (Stewart, 1855, p. 625). According to Stewart, the Rajah (chief) is the ultimate authority in the village or villages under him and no one is competent to give orders or inflict punishments except through him (*ibid*).

The institution of Thadou-Kuki chieftainship system might have emerged from the context of tribal wars in the past when a single authoritative figure was a necessity. In their grim struggle for existence and constant war with other tribes, they need a strong leader who could maintain the cohesiveness of the society and protect it from external threat. Thus, the evolution of a strong and authoritarian chieftainship of the Thadou-Kukis in particular and the Kukis in general was a historical requirement for survival (Ray, 1990, p. 45). The control and ownership of land became the necessary condition for maintaining the community as a homogenous community formed to provide a militant fortification against the enemy tribe (*ibid*).

Traditionally, there were two kinds of chiefs among the Thadou-Kukis. One is the Clan chief or principal chief called "*Pipa*" who have an influence over a wider network of land. The second is named "*Haosha*" (*Haosa*) or territorial chief (Bhadra, 1975, p. 23). A traditional tribal authority has its own legitimacy, which is obtained by either Kinship descent or by the sanctity of customary rules. Under the traditional types of domination, leaders derived their powers based on the concept of hereditary right. They are seen as legitimate in the light of customary rights and traditional norms (Morrison, 1995, p. 288). In the Thadou-Kuki society, the privilege of kinship descent and the law of primogeniture are the two traditional factors determining the title of chieftainship (Ray, 1990, p. 7). Except for minor local variations, the Kuki polity is ordered into seven-tiered structure, with the chief or *Hausapu* as the head.

Under traditional authority, Weber discussed two types of administrative apparatus, patrimonial and patriarchal (Weber, 1978). "The central characteristic of patriarchalism is the belief that authority is exercised by 'joint right' and in the interest of all members (Morrison, 1995, p. 290)." Unlike the case of patrimonial forms of administration, which rely on families, in patriarchal forms of administration, there ought to be personal staff retained from family members (ibid). The Chieftainship system amongst the Thadou-Kukis comes under the patriarchal forms of administration.

According to Asok Kumar Ray (1951, p. 38) the Thadou Kuki polity is ordered into seven-tiered structure, with the chief or *hausapu* as the head. He is assisted by the following offices:

1. *Semangpa* (prime-minister)
2. *Pachong* (secretary)
3. *Thiempu* (physician cum priest)
4. *Thihiu* (village blacksmith)
5. *Chonloi* (treasurer)
6. *Lom-upa* (youth director in charge of youth co-operative works)

7. *Kho-sam* (Announcer of the decisions of the village council)

T.S. Gangte (1993, Pp. 130-132) has listed the council members into three offices:

1. *Khawsam* or *Lhangsam Pa* (Information Secretary)

He is the spokesperson of the council. Literally speaking he is the councillor in charge of information and broadcasting. He convenes meeting of the council, conveys decisions of the Council to the public, and enforces or implements the decisions of the council. He may be asked to act in any capacity, such as in any capacity, such as, emissary, negotiator, mediator, depending upon his personal talent (ibid, p. 130).

2. *Thiempu* or Village Priest

Thiempu is the office of the village priest of medicine man. Literally speaking, he is the councillor-in-charge of public health in the truest sense of the term. Persons for this office are chosen from among those who knew the '*thiem-thu*' (the secret words of medicine). This office is very often regarded as hereditary, because the secrets of the medicines are not revealed to each and every person (ibid). He also performs incantation or presides over rituals in the process of settling disputes (ibid, p. 131).

3. *Thih-kheng Pa* or Black-Smith

The blacksmith is attributed an important status in the village. This office goes to the person who has the highest dexterity in black-smithy (ibid).

Dr. Satkhokai Chongloi (2009) describes how the *Khosung Inpi* (village government) elects prominent person for three main offices: The *Khosung Semang* (Village administrator), the *Khosung Pachong* (Village Defence Minister) and *Khosung Lhangsam* (Village Public Relation Minister or Foreign Minister). Besides these three, he also cites the existent of two other offices, which indirectly influenced the council through the important role they play in the society. The

Khosung Thempu (Village Priest) is the councillor-in-charge of public health. He used his skill in witchcraft in curing the sick and dealing with supernatural elements in the village. The *Kho Thih-khengpa* (blacksmith) is the authorized blacksmith of the village. In traditional village setting, he makes all agricultural tools, and repairs them free of cost. Like *Thempu*, he also receives “*Khotha*”, where all villagers gave a free labour by working in his agricultural field to show gratitude for his service (Chongloi, 2009).

The chief of the village and his council of ministers wields great authority and prerogatives over the villagers within the limit of their territorial jurisdiction. He performs judiciary, executive and legislative functions in consultation with his council of ministers. He is vested with absolute powers. The chiefs had to protect the interest of villagers by providing them security socially, politically and economically. The other important roles of the chiefs were to settle disputes, provide care and protection to his villagers. Chieftainship as an institution is the perennial source of customary laws and retainer of tradition. It is a mechanism by which customary laws are interpreted in the social system.¹

From the earliest times, the hill tribes practised different land use system in their domain. Though the entire land of the village theoretically belongs to the chief in the case of Thadou-Kukis, the village community who shared the land among themselves did the actual cultivation. The general condition that prevailed among the Kukis from the earliest times is that the land within the chieftaindom is distributed to the villager for cultivation and homestead. The land allotted to the villagers cannot be sold. If a family in the village wishes to migrate to another village, the land will automatically return to the chief. The member of the chiefs council with the approval of the chief superintend and transact all business matters in connection with the land – cultivation, measurement, collection of tax, etc. when a particular land is to be cultivated for Jhumming purposes by a villager

¹ Kipgen, as presented in National Seminar on *Land, Identity and Development: Manipur Experience* (16th and 17th Nov, 2007), organized by ICSSR, NERC

it has to be brought into the knowledge of the chiefs for approval. This shifting cultivation is necessitated by the absence of permanent allotment to the villagers.

By virtue of his status as a chief, the chief enjoyed certain privileges. The revenue exacted by these chieftains is paid in kind and labour. The chief receives tribute from the inhabitants of the village during hunting and ceremonial occasions and for making use of the land for productive purposes. They are –

1. '*Changseo*' is one basketful of paddy paid to the chief annually by each household for the right of cultivation,
2. '*Samal*' is the right hind leg of all hunted animals,
3. "*Lamkai*" is the one rupee paid to the chief by a purchaser for every head of mithun or buffalo or cattle,
4. "*Khotha*" is a oneday in a year free labour to the chief by one person from each household²,
5. "*ThilKotkai*" is an export fee paid to the chief and
6. "*Sukai*" is the four rupees paid to the chief by the bridegroom when he takes a girl for his wife.

One of the chief characteristics of the Thadou-Kukis was the essential habit of migration due to their mode of cultivation and due to the organisation of Chieftainship (Bhadra, 1975, p. 25). Their migration was never smooth. It was in most cases either followed or caused by inter-tribal feuds. If the opponents were stronger, and in fact they were so in many cases, the former had to move out of the place and migrate elsewhere. Hodson also wrote how a Kuki man once told him:

We are like the birds of the air. We make our nests here this year and who knows where we shall build next year (as cited in Bhadra, 1975, p. 26).

² Lieut. R. Stewart, 1855, "Notes on The Northern Cachar," however records that the villagers were obliged to work in the chief field for four days in a year

Stewart, a colonial administrator wrote in 1855, "...Kookie (Kuki) is also a migratory animal, and never remains more than three or four years at the same place (Stewart, 1855, p. 7)." Shaw also wrote, "The Thadou is a migratory and moves from village to village on the slightest pretext (Shaw, 1929, p. 16)." The practice of Jhum cultivation necessitates the process of migration as a means to search for virgin soils to increase the superior quality of produce (Bhadra, 1975, p. 26). Another interesting issue in the Thadou society is the obsession for the formation of new villages in order to form new leadership. The younger son of the chief or an influential adversary of the chief can form a new village.³

The Government of the neighbouring Naga tribes cannot be regarded as akin to the Kukis (Carey et al, 1983, p. 3). On the contrary, the Government of the Naga tribes is distinctly democratic. Their chieftainships are not necessarily hereditary, but are practically dependent on the determination of the tribesmen and their rule is based on the general approval of the clan. The position of the Kuki Chiefs, on the other hand is ascribed to them by birth and they take the initiative in all matters concerning the administration of their clansmen, by whom they are respected and feared (ibid).

4. 2. 2 Law and Justice

³ Permission from the chief of the village is necessary for one intending to establish a new village. Accordingly, the intending person first approaches the village chief for his approval. Once the approval is obtained, the intending person has to perform certain social and ritual functions. Along with his Becha and the Tucha the person has to bring a jar of wine and a pig as offering to the chief of his native village. A feast arranged in the house of the village chief follows this. Counsellors of the village chief and other important elders are invited to the feast. On this occasion, the village chief holds discussion with his counsellors about the request for permission to build a new village. Only after such a discussion, the village chief expresses his approval or disapproval to such a proposal. If the village chief agrees to the proposal, the intending person is free to go ahead with building a new village. The pioneer automatically becomes the chief of the new village and every new inhabitant of the new village and every new inhabitant of the village is required to contribute a basketful of paddy to the village chief every year. This system of contribution of a measured quantity of paddy to the village chief every year is known as *Changseo*.

In any society, the primary needs are order and discipline, welfare and security. It is natural, therefore, that these should be important subjects of tribal law (Archer, 1984, p. 451). Shri Gopinath Bardoloi in the Constituent Assembly Debates of the Sixth Schedules gave the autonomous character of village administration amongst the hill tribes. He says:

One of the things which I felt was very creditable to these tribals was the manner in which they settle their disputes. Cases, which would go in the name of murder according to our Penal Code, were settled by these people by the barest method of Panchayat (village customary court) decision and by payment only of compensation (as cited in Savyasaachi, 1998, p. 122).

The Thadou-Kukis like all hill tribes of Manipur have their own customary court unique and known by different names in each village. By Customary Court, the paper meant the traditional law enforcing body comprising of the chief and his *Semang Pachong* (council of ministers). The Customary Court is the highest body of law in any villages dominated by the Thadou speaking group of the Kuki Tribe. It has as its constitution the traditional customary laws that are unwritten and retained orally. Colonial administrator like Lieut. R. Stewart (1855, p. 627) referring to the North Cachar wrote as early as 1855 the appointment of 'muntries' by the Rajah (Chief) to assist him in carrying on the affairs of the government. They are exempt from free labour and taxation that is due to the Raja from all villagers. The office is not, strictly speaking, hereditary, although in most cases, except when thoroughly incompetent, the son succeeds the father, but is given to those qualified for it, as being men of property and influence as well as of ability and good spokespersons (Stewart, 1855, p. 627). Dr. Satkhokai Chongloi uses the phrase "*Khosung Inpi Thutanna*" or village court to describe it (Chongloi, 2009). The Chief's house or a separate one in the compound of the chief is used as the court. This Customary Court also exists in areas that are not under chieftainship

system like Kangpokpi Urban Town.⁴ The term of the village authority is for 2 years in Tujang Vaichong, 3 years in Motbung and 3 years in Kangpokpi.

In settling disputes, the customary laws are respected and have an overall authority. Howard S. Becker (Becker, 1963) one of the early exponents of the interactionist approach argues that deviance is not a quality that lies in behaviour itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those who responded to it. From this point of view, deviance is produced by a process of interaction between the potential deviant and the agents of social control. Deviant behaviour or social deviance generally threatens social stability. A culture or society can function efficiently only if there is order and predictability in social life. Non-compliance to the norms threatens this order and predictability. The Customary Court ever since its inception has laid down rigid norms that have to be followed by every member in their jurisdiction. These laws are incongruence with the customary laws of the Kuki society. There are of course certain instances in which the laws are modified according to the context or the gravity of the situation. Besides mapping out the rules and regulation, they have also stipulated the mode of punishment for non-compliance of such laws.

C.A. Soppitt (1893, p. 21) recorded the case of the Kukis in North Cachar Hills. All crimes, even the most serious, appear to have been punished by fine only. On the occasion of any oath being taken, either on the restoration of peace between villages or between private individuals, the following is the procedure: A bear's or tiger's skull is placed upon the ground, a nettle-leaf, husk (paddy), and a sword blade. The persons (or person) to be sworn then step forward, and repeat the terms of the treaty or agreement, and, pointing to the skull, say – "If I break faith, may a bear or tiger, similar to the one this skull belonged to, devour me; may I be stung by the nettle now before me; may the seed I sow be as fruitless as this husk; and may I struck by a sword. Heaven and earth now witness this oath (Soppitt, 1976, p. 21)."

⁴ Kangpokpi is not under chieftainship system but under the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee. It is under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration.

He also records another practice, which he considers a very strange custom that was in force among all the Kukis as a method for testing the truth of a man's words. He wrote:

It being impossible to ascertain the respective veracity of two statements, the parties interested agrees to appeal to the water-test. All the villagers are assembled, and proceed to some spot on a river where the water is deep. Here two bamboos are fixed firmly in the mud or gravel at the bottom. The priest of the village then cuts the throat of a white fowl on the brow of each disputant, allowing the blood to run down the face. Should the blood flow red in one case and blackish in the other, the matter is considered half proved, the red showing the man whose statement was true. To make matters certain the test has to be completed. At a given signal, both men plunge into the river, and by the aid of the bamboos, attempt to get to the bottom, and bring up some mud or a stone. The one who fails is the guilty party (Soppitt, 1976, p. 22).

William Shaw records the method of trial by chiefs. Both the parties bring a jar of *ju* (wine) each to the chief's house where the matter in dispute is tried. The old men⁵ of the village are usually present also and generally the influence of the *ju* make a compromise by the chief easy as most are well under the influence of it before leaving and are so genially inclined that they will agree to a great deal (Shaw, 1929, P. 66).

Bloodshed is classified into two types--- (1) *Bil Tan Deh Keh* (injury in the ear and the forehead) and (2) *Thi-kiso* (murder). According Letpao Lhouvum⁶ in the proceeding over the killing of a person, the redressal mechanism is slightly more elaborate as the act of terminating human life is considered the gravest of all crimes. There are fines stipulated to represent certain parts of the body. The

⁵ By old men, Shaw must have meant the village elderly. The Kuki society being a highly gerontocratic society in the past had high regards for the wisdom of the aged population. Their grey hair commands respect from the rest of the population and they constitute an important vote banks in the village administration and legal proceedings.

⁶ Lhouvum, Letpao, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, Interviewed on the 13th Oct, 2008

murderers are classified into two kinds—accidental and intentional. The penalty and mode of dealing depends on which category it falls on.

- *Dahpi* (gong)—Represents the head of the victim
- *Khichang/ Khichoung* (beads or chain of beads made of cornelian stone)—represents the eyes
- *Khivui* (garland)—representing the umbilical chord

Moreover, the murderer and his family have to pay for certain materials that are necessary as per the customs for the decent burial of a death body.

- *Puondum* (Among the Thadou speaking clans, the prescriptive colour of the cloth should be black with two lines of white colour on the border, length-wise. This is no longer a compulsion today.)—for covering the dead body
- *Kosa*—After the dead body is taken out of the house, it is customary for the family of the deceased to feed the guest who had come to condole or to participate in the funeral.⁷ This is called 'Kosa'. It is also meant for purification of the house and to pray for blessing for the bereaved family so that no similar calamity would befall in the house after that.
- *Luongman*⁸—price of the dead body

As a redressive mechanism, *Sa-lam-sat* is a fine imposed on a guilty person paid in terms of mithun.⁹ Another official term is *Hem Kham*, which literally means stopping the sharp edge of a knife is another important mechanism for maintaining peace and tranquillity. It means that the village chief has already avenged the death of the persons and no further action is required to avenge the

⁷ Thuchih Gil Thulom, 2000 Mimkut Committee, Molvom, Nagaland, p. 3

⁸ I have not included the cultural meaning of 'luongman' for this paper. Loungman in this paper would only apply to the price that the murderer has to pay to the victim's family as penalty for committing the crime.

⁹ Lhouvum, Kailal, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, Interviewed on 12th Oct, 2008

death.¹⁰ *Tol-theh* in its literal term means 'ground cleaning.' The guilty person has to bring a pig and a jar of wine due to the chief from the person who sheds any human blood in a village affray (Shaw, 1929, p. 66). In cases of theft, it is customary for the thief to return the articles stolen and to pay one mithun as compensation (ibid). Mithun as a penalty was the most common form of fine imposed in the past. This either has assumed the form of monetary transaction or been largely replace by the pig. On this subject Shaw wrote, "The penalty of a mithun is, of course, theoretical, and would not be exacted in serious cases or where the thief proved indecently contentious (Shaw, 1929, p. 66)."

Victor Turner's (1957) book on 'Schism and Continuity in an African Society' is relatable to understand the institution of the Customary Court in the Kuki society. The kind of redressive mechanism deployed to handle conflict and the sources of initiative to end crises, which are all clearly manifest in any social setting, provide valuable clues to the character of the social system. It is interesting at the way in which the punishment always entails distancing them from the things that matters most or actions that have direct consequences on their livelihood or status in the society.

Though all Customary Court in any Thadou speaking group of the Kukis will have similar customary laws that governs it, there is sure to be difference from region to region even as the structure remains the same. The difference could be due to modifications to suit the context or changing times or the manner in which it have been passed down orally from generation to generation. The main aim is to maintain tranquillity and normalcy in the social structure.

4. 3 The Post Colonial Experience: Administration of Hill Areas after Independence

There has been two opposed positions with regard to the Tribals in India, namely, either the tribal people should be 'left alone' or they should be 'integrated into the

¹⁰ Guite, Haokholien, Chairmen of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Interviewed on 26th November, 2008

mainstream dominant social order' without destroying their rights to livelihood (Savyasaachi, 1998, p. 1). The State policy towards tribal forest dwellers in India, is aimed at bringing them within the dominant mainstream social order (ibid, p. 2). The State agencies while not directly questioning the relevance of the traditional land systems enact new land laws in order to keep pace with the democratic norms of the country. Consequently, there have been inevitable changes in land ownership system, such changes largely affecting community land and village forest. Shimray rightly says that the main factors responsible for the changes in land ownership system are: socio-economic transition, population pressure on land and also internal transformation in the village system (Shimray, 2009, pp. 250-251). A series of acts was passed regarding the improvement of the administration in the hill areas.

There exists a dual system of administration for the hills and the valley ever since the British annexed the independent kingdom of Manipur in 1891 (Bhatia, 2010, p. 40). With the passing of the Indian Independence Act in 1947, Manipur became independent along with other princely states of India (Kshetri, 2006, p. 6) and the administration of the hill areas fell in the hands of the Maharaja of Manipur. Manipur remained a constitutional monarchy from the later part of the year 1947 up to the accession to that Indian Union on September 1949. The Hill Administration, which was under the exclusive jurisdiction of the president of Manipur State Darbar, was transferred to the Maharaja of Manipur with effect from 10th of August 1947 and was to be exercised in accordance with the constitution act of the state and provision of this regulation (Ray, 1990). The draft constitution of Manipur had two parts – The Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 and The Manipur Hill Peoples Administration Regulation Act, 1947 (ibid). When the state of Manipur was undergoing transition from being a union territory to statehood in 1972, there were successions of Acts conceded to administer the hill areas. These were: (1) The Manipur Hill people's (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947, (2) the Manipur Village Authorities (Hill Areas) Act, 1956, (3) the Manipur

(Hill Areas) Acquisition of Chief's Rights Act, 1967 and (4) the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act, 1971 (Bhatia, 2010, p. 40).

4. 3. 1 The Manipur Hill Peoples Administration Regulation Act, 1947

The Manipur State Hill peoples (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947 constituted a village authority to replace the traditional village council. It curtailed the Thadou-Kuki customs of forming new villages to form new chiefs or local migratory habits. The purpose of restricting the minimum number of houses to twenty was to check the fragmentation of the villages in the hills, which was convenient from the administrative point of view (Ray, 1990, p. 88). The Thadou-Kukis as a tradition has an obsession for forming new villages for changing leadership. The younger son of the chief or an influential adversary of the chief can form a new village. This resulted in the formation of new villages, which were insignificant. This had poses difficulty for the colonial rulers who were going to administer it.

For the purpose of administration conveniences, the hill areas were divided into circles, sub-divisions and villages. A village authority was formed in each village having twenty or more tax paying houses. The members of the Village Authority were nominated by the village elders in accordance with the traditional customs of the village concerned (Kshetri, 2006, p. 7). This need to be formally recognised by the Sub-Divisional officer with whom is vested the final authority in appointment and constitution (Ray, 1990, p. 89). For the purpose of administration, all villages to which the regulation applies were divided into Circles and Sub-Divisions. In each 'Circle' there shall be constituted a circle authority and a council of five members elected by village authorities falling within the circle.

The following votes was recorded in according to the number of taxpaying houses –

20---50 tax paying houses-----one vote

50---100 tax paying houses-----two votes

100---200 tax paying houses-----three votes

In the villages which had more than 200 taxpaying houses, one additional vote may be recorded for every 100 in excess of 200 (ibid).¹¹ Those villages with less than 20 tax-paying houses were not recognised as villages for the purpose of regulation and those villages came under the direct control of the Circle Authority, the next higher administrative body (ibid). The numbers of the recognised chiefs were reduced and smaller villages with less than twenty houses were left unrepresented in the Circle Council.

The Circle Authority was responsible for the promotion of lower and upper primary education, maintenance of the bridle paths and bridges, maintenance of land record, assessment and collection of land tax. The responsibility of improving agricultural products and checking or reducing *jhum* cultivation was also given to the Circle Authority. With the assistance of the village authorities, the circle authorities were to maintain law and order in their respective areas (Kshetri, 2006, p. 7).

The financial provision as under the Manipur Hill People's (Administration) Regulation Act was ambiguous. It stated that when a village authority levies a fine, the authority may retain the customary village fine and the balance shall be credited to the state revenues.¹² According to Ray (1990, p. 91), neither the words "customary due" nor the word "balance" were properly defined to fit in with the requirement of financial provision the core of the regulation.

The Circle Council as constituted under the Hill people's (Administration) Regulation of 1947, took drastic steps towards curtailing the Customary rights enjoyed by the chiefs and the village elders in the Thadou-Kuki society (ibid, p.

¹¹ Section 9(ii) of the Manipur Hills Peoples, (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947

¹² Section 66 (b) of the Manipur Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947

92). In the Thanlon Circle Council meeting¹³, the main thrust was given upon the curtailment of the tributary privileges enjoyed by the chiefs. Thus, it was resolved that:

1. The custom of *inpisap*¹⁴ should cease and in future in all cases coming up in front of the village council, the parties shall pay a sum of Rs. 1 each only.
2. The practice of *khulkho*¹⁵ should cease and in future, all the chiefs will have a normal hedge around their houses by requesting their villagers to build it.
3. The practice of *Thapi* (one day free labour in a year to the chief given by the villagers) be abolished (ibid, p. 92)
4. The custom of *sukai* (bride price) and *sialkotkaiman* (cattle price) be abolished and the practice of *lounzman* (death price) and *inbohman* (house pollution price) be abolished.
5. *Changseo*¹⁶ payable to the chief to be fixed at the rate of five kerosene tins of paddy per house or a sum of Rs. 2 when the household cannot give paddy. Poor families may get special consideration by the chief and the final decision rests with the village authority.
6. The practice of seizing paddy of a migrator be abolished. If the chief abstains, he will direct the seller as to whom he can sell it in his village or failing any buyer, the migrator may sell it to outsider.
7. Thatched house of the migrator will become the property of the chief, but any pucca or semi-pucca building can be sold by the migrator and does not become the property of the chief.

¹³ Resolution Nos. 2-6 and 8-12 of the 2nd Session of the Meeting of the Circle Council, on 30th April and 1st May, 1947 as documented in Ray, 1990, pp. 92-93

¹⁴ extra charges taken by certain Kuki chiefs in handling the cases of the people

¹⁵ building special fence of wooden board for the chief

¹⁶ basketful of rice generally paid to the Thadou Kuki chiefs to recognise him as an overseer of all the lands in the villages

4. 3. 2 The Manipur Village Authorities in Hill Areas Act, 1956

After 1950, Manipur came under the provisions of Part-C of Article 371 of the Indian Constitution¹⁷, and the Circle Council was abolished. Manipur had acceded to the Union of India in September 1949. In 1956, the Parliament passed the Manipur Village Authorities Act in the Hills Areas Act. It was implemented in 1957 (Shimray, 2006, p. 13). “The Hill Peoples’ (Administration) Regulation was repealed in part by section 58 of the Manipur (Village Authorities in the Hill Areas) Act, 1956 (Ray, 1990, p. 95).” The section reads:

The Manipur State hill peoples’ (administration) Regulation, 1947 in so far as it relates to the composition and function of village authorities and the administration of justice, both civil, and criminal, by the courts of village authorities, is hereby repealed.¹⁸

Under the Hill Peoples’ Administration Regulation Act of 1947, all members of the village authority consisting of the chief and his council of elders were nominated according to the prevailing custom. The chief becomes the ex-officio Chairman of the village authority. However, for other councillors, there was no chance unless they were elected. (Haokip, 2009, p.311). The Sub-Divisional Magistrate exercises control over the village authorities, whereas ultimate control is with the Chief Commissioner (Ray, 1990, 96). The Institute for Human Development report wrote:

This Act may be regarded as one of the first steps towards the democratisation of hill administration in Manipur. By placing certain restrictions on the powers of the chief and by introducing adult franchise at the lowest level of administration...the common villagers became aware of democratic values and practices (as cited in Bhatia, 2010, p. 40).

¹⁷ Article 371 (C) Clause [2]: “The Governor shall annually, or whenever so required by the President make a report to the President regarding the administration of the Hill Areas in the State of Manipur and the executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of directions to the state as to the administration of the said areas.”

¹⁸ Section 58 of the Manipur (Village Authorities in the Hill Areas) Act, 1956

The Act met with opposition by the hill tribes especially the Kukis who believed that it was an attempt to do away with the rights of the chiefs over land (ibid).

4. 3. 3 The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960

Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reform Act, 1960 is another significant legislative measure that has an important bearing on the land ownership or holding system of the tribals. The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act of 1960 was enforced throughout the Imphal Valley and in some part of the Hill Areas where the Land Survey had been conducted (Gangte, 2010, p. 132). According to this provision all land including forests, mines and minerals therein are not the property of any person but are property of the state. This is in conformity with the Manipuri tradition that the king was the absolute proprietor of all land within his territory in the valley. Nevertheless, for the protection of the tribals, the Act incorporated special provision under Sec. 158¹⁹ which prohibited

¹⁹ Section 158: Special provision regarding Scheduled Tribes: No transfer of land by a person who is a member of the Scheduled Tribes shall be valid unless- (a) the transfer is to another member of the Scheduled tribes; or (b) where the transfer is to a person who is not a member of any such tribe, it is made with the previous permission in writing of the Deputy Commissioner, provided that the Deputy Commissioner shall not give such permission unless he has first secured the consent thereto of the District Council within whose jurisdiction the land lies:

Or (c) The transfer is by way of mortgage to a co-operative society.

158-A. Restriction on transfer of land

No agricultural land shall be transferred to any person except for his personal cultivation provided that the Deputy Commissioner concerned may, subject to rule as may be prescribed, allow any non tiller to purchase any land in the absence of any willing tiller to purchase the same land.

158-B Restriction on land transfer of land to non-residents

No land shall be transferred in favour of any person unless he has been an ordinary resident in the state provided that the Deputy Commissioner may permit the transfer of land in favour of a person who has not been ordinarily resident in the state if he has been a resident of the state for not less than 30 years.

158-C Restriction on new settlement, etc.

There shall be no new settlement or formation of any machet in the hill areas without the permission of the state government and no such permission for new settlement or formation of any machet in hill area should be given unless the new settlement or formation of any machet has

the sale or transfer of tribal's land to a non-tribal without the prior permission of the Deputy Commissioner and the previous consent of the District Council. The Act does not apply to the hill areas of the State but the State government may extend the whole or any part or any section of the Act to any part of the hill areas of Manipur by calling upon Section (2) 1 of the Act. According to this section, the term hill areas means such areas in the hill-tracts of the state of Manipur as the state government may by notification in the official gazette declared to be 'hill areas'. The hill district do not automatically become 'hill areas' by virtue of its location in the hill districts as it requires declaration by notification in the form of official gazette. This section empowers the government to extent the Act in the hill areas in a planned and calculated manner.²⁰ The State Government has since notified that the following are the hill areas namely –

1. Jiribam Sub-division (mainly plains)--Hill areas only 24 villages. (In the remaining 92 villages, the MLR and LR Act 1960 was extended under Government notification No. 142/12/60-R Dated 22.2.62, and these 92 villages are included in the plain portion of the Imphal district.)
2. Tengnoupal sub-division – 190 villages – Hill Areas
3. Tamenglong sub-division – 196 villages – Hill Areas
4. Ukhrul sub-division – 244 villages – Hill Areas
5. Mao & Maram sub-division – 312 villages – Hill Areas
6. Churachandpur sub-division – 225 villages – Hill Areas

50-75 families. This part of the Amendment Bill is contradictory to the District Council Act, and Village Authority (V.A.) Act.

This Amendment also proposed to repeal the Manipur Hill Areas (house tax) Act, 1966, by inserting it under section 16-A, of the MLR & LR Act, making it liable to payment of an annual tax in lieu of land revenue at the rate of such tax determined by the State government having regard to the rates of land revenue and the assessed tax be realized in such manner as may be prescribed. This amendment further attempts to regulate and control jhum or migratory cultivation by making rules in the name of protection of environment.

²⁰ Section 2 (1) of MLR & LR Act of 1960

In the remaining 89 villages of Churachandpur, the Act was extended in 1962 vide notification No. 142/12/60-M Dated 22.2.62. In the above named "hill-areas", the MLR & LR Act 1960 does not apply (Das, 1989, p. 30). The Deputy Commissioners of the hill districts seemed to be the opinion that due to non-extension of the Act in the hill areas, they are unable to take up survey work in those areas since there is resistance, especially from the village chiefs. The Government, however, holds the view that extension should be done gradually, in a planned manner and in selected pockets only (ibid).

In pursuance of this cautious policy of gradual extension of the Act to the hill areas, it has been extended to the hill districts that lies more or less in the plain areas situated within the boundaries of the respective hill districts²¹,--

- (1) 89 villages of Churachandpur District, vide Govt. notification No. 142/12/60-M Dt. 22. 2. 62
- (2) Makhaw Tampak village of Churachandpur, vide notification No. 140/12/60-M (A) Dt. 20. 11. 69
- (3) 14 villages of Mao Sub division, situated in the Sadar Hills Circles, vide notification No. 138/ 4/ 64-M Dt. 26.2.65
- (4) 809 hectares of land in Khonpum valley of Tamenglong district, vide Govt. notification No. 3/ 12/83 – LRC Dt. 14.11. 1978 (Das, 1989, p. 30).

J. N. Das (1989, p. 53-59) studied the consequences on the villages in the Hill areas to which this Act has been extended in a village called Saikot in Churachandpur District of Manipur. All occupants, even those whose families had come at the time of establishment of the village were regarded as possessors of vacant Government land. Under section 15 of the MLR and LR Act 1960, they came to be, in the eye of the law, trespassers or encroachers and were advised to apply under

section 14 for allotment of the same land, which they had possessed for generations. The hill areas from the colonial period were made to pay Hill House Tax. Villages under the MLR & LR Act were subjected to dual taxation. They had to pay both the Hill House Tax as well the Land Revenue, which is meant for the valley population. Even the chief had to pay premium for obtaining allotment of the land.²²

The total number of villages in the state of Manipur being 2109, the territorial jurisdiction of the MLR & LR Act 1960 extends to about 31% of the total number of villages of the state, and in terms of population, it extends to about 71% of the total population of the State (ibid, p. 31).

There have been attempts made through a series of amendments to incorporate the Hill areas under a single land system. The new sixth Amendment Bill intends to remove the word 'except hill areas thereof' mentioned under sub-section 2 (1). The aim is to make the extension to the Act absolute or statutory, including the hill areas of Manipur. The tribals vehemently opposed the proposed amendment bill and demanded the withdrawal of the bill. Due to such opposition from the hill people, the bill is still awaiting the assent of the Governor (Kipgen, 2009, p. 342). The seventh Amendment Bill 1992 introduced new sections for removing the restriction of land transfer in the hills and making the revenue tribunal the highest authority under the MLR & LR Act retrospectively from the 1975 Amendment and no further appeal shall lie from this court (ibid, p. 342).

The Act has met with stiff opposition from the chiefs especially from the villages that falls within the boundaries lines of the valley areas. This has obstructed the land survey operations in the hill areas. Plea has been made by the people to the State government not to direct a revenue survey in the hill areas unless it has first obtained the consent of the chief within whose village such areas lies (Kshetri,

²² Das stated that the present chief now possess allotment-pata (Pata no. 100/2) and pays land revenue at rupees 4. 22 for his homestead (vide receipt no. 36 BK No. 63 Dt. 26. 4. 79) besides paying house-tax at rupees 6 per year (1989, p. 54).

2006). In fact, there is a clear hiatus between government version and the chiefs' conviction about the nature of ownership over land (including forest) (ibid).

Another impact of the MLR &LR, 1960 was on the issue of the Patta system. Patta in respect of lands are known to be in existence as early as 1892. But patta system as envisaged in Assam land and Revenue Regulation 1896 was introduced when the said Regulation was extended to Manipur Valley. Owners of lands are liable to pay revenue were given a Patta signed by the Deputy Commissioner, which recognised the rights of the owner in the lands covered by the patta. These rights were heritable and transferable. After the M.L.R. and L.R. Act 1960 came into force, this came to be the only form of patta valid in law, as neither revenue-free tenures, nor service tenures, nor is annual leases permitted to be held by the State Government. In the Hill areas of Manipur, as a legacy from the British India Period, individual Rights given to the Tribal Chiefs were handed down from generation to generation. This is given cognisance by the Government to the effect that the piece of land over which their rights were given were recognised as the land belonging to the Chiefs. The Sub-Division Officers or District Magistrates, under whose jurisdiction the village landfall issues documents, which is, considered to be equivalent to Patta in the valley (Gangte, 2010, p. 132).

4. 3. 4 The Manipur Hill Areas Acquisition of Chief's Rights Act, 1967

The institution of chiefship was abolished in the Chin Hills of Burma (Myanmar) based on the recommendation of the Commission of Enquiry in February 1948. Similarly, the Government of Assam passed 'The Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chiefs' Rights) Bill 1954,' in March 1954. The result was that the rights and interests of 259 Mizo chiefs and 50 Pawi-Lakher chiefs became vested in the government (Haokip, 2009, p. 313). It was in this background that the Manipur Hill Areas Chiefs' Rights Acquisitions Bill was first introduced in the Manipur Legislative Assembly in 1996. It was an attempt to acquire the rights and privileges of the chief and thereby abolish the institution of chieftainship in

exchange for compensation (ibid, p. 314). Chieftainship is an institution that stood in the way of the government in formulating a uniform policy.

The very fact of such an enactment is the acknowledgement of the existing rights of the Chiefs. The game plan is that, if the Chiefs rights are first acquired by State and then the MLR & LR Act 1960 is extended to these villagers, then all vacant lands would be Government land, and thereafter the government may apply the Allotment Rules and realise premium for setting new lands. According to Das, the Government should provide them the proper status, i.e. the status of landowner under section 99²³ of the MLR & LR Act of 1960 (Das, 1989, p. 57).

4. 3. 5 The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971

Manipur, like Tripura has areas that are covered under Part IX of the Constitution, namely the valley areas, and the hill areas that are not covered under Part IX of the Constitution. However, unlike Tripura, these hill areas are not covered under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, but under a State Legislation, the Manipur Hill Areas District Councils Act, 1971. This Act has provisions similar to that contained in the Sixth Schedule and has established six Autonomous District Councils in Manipur, covering 5 districts. The details of these districts are as follows:²⁴

²³ Every person who, at the commencement of the Act, holds any land from the Government for agricultural purposes, whether as a settlement holder or as a pattadar shall become the landowner. The words 'settlement-holder' and 'pattadar' has not been defined in the Act (Das, 1989, p. 61).

²⁴ Planning for the Sixth Schedule Areas (and those areas not covered by parts IX and IX A of the Constitution), Report of the Expert Committee, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GOI, September 2007, New Delhi

Table 2:

Sl. No.	Name of Hill District	Sl. No.	Name of ADC	Administrator	Date on which Administrator appointed
1.	Senapati (Manipur North)	1.	Senapati ADC	Deputy Commissioner, Senapati (Manipur North) District	17 th October 1988
		2.	Sadar Hills ADC	Additional Deputy Commissioner, Senapati (Manipur North) District	17 th October 1988
2.	Churachandpur (Manipur South)	3.	Churachandpur ADC	Deputy Commissioner, Churachandpur (Manipur South) District	20 th December 1990
3.	Ukhrul (Manipur East)	4.	Ukhrul ADC	DC, Ukhrul (Manipur East) District	20 th December 1990

4.	Tamenglong (Manipur West)	5.	Tamenglong ADC	DC, Tamenglong, (Manipur West) District	20 th December 1990
5.	Chandel (Manipur South East)	6.	Chandel ADC	DC, Chandel (Manipur South East) District	18 th March, 1989

The hill districts return 20 of the 60 MLAs that comprise the legislative assembly of Manipur State. These 20 MLAs now comprise the Hill Council, in terms of Article 371C²⁵ of the Constitution.²⁶ Elections to the Autonomous District Councils constituted under the Manipur Hill Areas District Councils Act, 1971 were first held in 1973 and the councils were constituted on the 1st August, 1973. However, elected District Councils were superseded and their administration was entrusted to the District officials of the Districts concerned as detailed below:

²⁵ Article 371C of the Constitution contains special provision with respect to the State of Manipur, which reads as follows:

“(1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, the President may, by order made with respect to the State of Manipur, provide for the constitution and functions of a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the State consisting of members of that Assembly elected from the Hill Areas of that State, for the modifications to be made in the rules of business of the Government and in the rules of procedure of the Legislative Assembly of the state and for any special responsibility of the Governor in order to secure the proper functioning of such committee.

(2) The Governor shall annually, or whenever so required by the President, make a report to the President regarding the administration of the Hill Areas in the State of Manipur and the executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of directions to the state as to the administration of the said areas”

²⁶ Planning for the Sixth Schedule Areas (and those areas not covered by parts IX and IX A of the Constitution), Report of the Expert Committee, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GOI, September 2007, New Delhi, p. 68

Table 3: Autonomous District Councils in the Hill Districts²⁷

Sl. No.	Name of District Headquarters	Population
1.	Manipur South/ Churachandpur	98114
2.	Manipur North/ Senapati	38424
3.	Manipur East/ Ukhrul	62229
4.	Manipur West/ Tamenglong	44775
5.	Manipur Sardar Hills/ Kangpokpi	68751
6.	Tengnoupal/ Chandel	38723

Elections of the District Councils were postponed for twenty years in the Hills of Manipur. The Hill Areas Committee set up under Article 371 C of the Constitution unanimously resolved on 20-12-1990 that elections to District Councils should not be held until and unless the provisions of the VI Schedule of the Constitution of India are extended to the present District Councils of Manipur.²⁸ They decided to oppose the Manipur Autonomous District Council (MADC) elections, maintaining that, the provisions of the 1971 Act, was 'without power and separate budget for the hill people'. They came out with the demand for sixth schedule.²⁹ "The government responded by taking one step forward and two steps backwards: in 1975 the First Amendment Bill was passed with some changes, followed by a more substantial move towards making the district councils 'autonomous' by passing the Manipur Hill Areas Autonomous District Council Bill in July 2000 (Bhatia, 2010, p. 41)."

After consideration of the resolution of the Hill Areas Committee, the State Cabinet meeting held on 28-3-2001 decided that the State Government had no

²⁷ Op cit

²⁸ ibid

²⁹ News posted on February

2010, <http://www.tangkhul.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=6669>. (accessed date, 14th Jan, 2011)

objection to the extension of the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to the Tribal Areas in the Hill Districts of Manipur with “certain local adjustments and amendments.”³⁰ However, there was no further progress made on this and a second Amendment Bill was passed in March 2006 effectively revoking it. There were two years of silence after which the Third Amendment Bill was presented in the legislative assembly on 19 March 2008. This was accompanied by allegations of irregularities in the processes that followed, and the bill was eventually withdrawn (Bhatia, 2010, p. 41).³¹

4. 4 Asserting Land Rights

4. 4. 1 Restoration of the Chieftainship System

In the matter of restoration of the status of the chiefs and for the protection of their traditional rights, the Thadou-Kuki chiefs had no ideological difference with the other Kuki chiefs in Manipur. In 1984, the Sadar Hills Kuki Chiefs Organisation of Manipur categorically claimed that chieftainship is a vital organisation of the Kuki ethnic group and the chief’s right over their lands never affected the economic life of the community rather the right acts as the effective protection of the tribal territory. The phenomenon of land alienation to the non-tribals has strengthened their point of opposition to the land reforms on the ground that after such reforms, lands might be alienated to non-tribals.

The Tribal Land Protection and Restoration Committee also gave tacit recognition to the chiefs as the protector of tribal land. The memorandum they submitted stated: “The contentions from a section of the people that the Hill chiefs or

³⁰ Planning for the Sixth Schedule Areas (and those areas not covered by parts IX and IX A of the Constitution), Report of the Expert Committee, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GOI, September 2007, New Delhi, p. 69

³¹ The two irregularities that were pointed out were: (1) The State assembly constituted an extra constitutional body called the Select Committee to work on [the Principal Bill 2008] introduced by the HAC (Hill Area Committee). Three of the five members...are not elected from the Hill Areas of the state. (2) Many clauses in the report of the select committee...were found in bad taste. [It] wanted to delete the word “Autonomous” from the title...[replace] “Self Government” [with] “Local Self Governance”, “Tribals” [with] “People of the Hill Areas”...(as cited in Bhatia, 2010, p. 41).

individuals were responsible for land erosion... is a false notion. All such transactions are illegally done (and addicted to) by selfish individuals who ought to have been penalised for their heinous activity" (Dasgupta, 1991, p. 63). In a private member's resolution in the Manipur Legislative Assembly, Mr. Ngulkhohao, and Member of Legislative Assembly of the Saikot Constituency defended the chiefs in the following words:

They (Chiefs) are simply land protectors and not dictators like Zamindars in other parts of India. The Kuki Chin chiefs are just mere distributors of village lands just for jhumming cultivation purposes, and the rights over land, chunk of village land, are the rights inherited since the days of the Britishers (ibid, p. 64).

In April 1985, the Sadar Hills Kuki Chiefs' organisation in a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Manipur unequivocally described the village authority Act as "an impediment to the Kuki way of life."³² The Chiefs' Union Manipur in 1988 also proposed that the rights of the chief to the land of the village shall, according to the customary law be applicable to him, continue to vest in him, and that he shall continue to enjoy such customary dues from his villagers whether he is the ex-officio chairman of the village authority.³³

According to T.T. Haokip (2009, p. 313), the Manipur Village Authority Act is silent in the areas of financial sanctions to the Village Authorities and the village courts. He voices the anxiety of the Kuki Chiefs and the Kuki leaders who felt that the Village Authority Act, 1956 was imposed upon the Kukis without any understanding of their ground reality. In another memorandum to the Home Minister of India by the same organisation it was again emphasised that the "Chieftainship is the vital institution to the Kuki ethnic (group) and the Chiefs'

³² Memorandum submitted to the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Manipur, Shri Rishang Keishing by the Sadar Hills Chiefs' Organization, Dt. Motbung, the 14th April, 1985, as documented in Haokip, 2009, pp. 311-312

³³ Letter to the Hon'ble Chairman of the Hill Areas Committee, Manipur Legislative Assembly by the Chairman of the Executive Committee, Chiefs' Union, Manipur, Churachandpur, Manipur, 14th July 1986, as documented in Haokip, 2009, p. 312

right over their lands never effect the economic life of the community rather the rights act as the effective protection of the tribal territory”.³⁴

Things took an interesting turn when the Chief’s Union of Manipur in a letter to the Chairman of the Hill Areas Committee of the Manipur Legislative Assembly quoted a Government order No. 10/10-73 dated 5.12.78 that states, “Tribal chiefs are entitled to compensation for acquisition of their lands by the Government for public purpose. Though the lands are not Patta lands, tribal chiefs have assessed rights to its use over the lands within the village boundaries”. In the same letter the following points were made to appeal the amending of the Manipur Hill Village Authority Act:

1. The village chiefs shall be entitled to receive five tins of paddy from every household of their village every year.
2. *Samal/ Sating*: the hind leg to foreleg of all wild animals killed by any villager shall go to the village chief concerned.
3. The village chiefs shall preside over the village court sitting as well as the village authority sitting.
4. After choosing his own Jhum land, the chief will first allocate Jhums to his elders (Council of Elders) and after that the other villagers will follow by drawing lots.³⁵

In 1986, in another Memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner of Senapati District of Manipur, the Sadar Hills Kuki Chiefs’ Organisation demanded the restoration of the status of the chief to their past glory. It claimed that the chiefs

³⁴ Memorandum submitted to the Hon’ble Home Minister Shri V.P. Narasimha Rao, Govt. of India by the Sadar Hills Kuki Chiefs’ Organisation, Dated Motbung, the 7th October, 1984

³⁵ Letter to the Hon’ble Chairman of the Hill Areas Committee, Manipur Legislative Assembly by the Chairman of the Executive Committee, Chiefs’ Union, Manipur, Churachandpur, Manipur, 14th July, 1986, as documented in Ray, 1990, p. 103

were the effective protectors of their land.³⁶ In a seminar-cum conference of the Chiefs' Union Manipur held at Churachandpur in February, 1988 in which a good number of the Kuki chiefs attended. Three important points were raised :--

- a) Amendment of the Manipur Village Authorities in the Hill Areas Act, 1956;
- b) Amendment of the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960;
- c) Amendment of the Indian Forest Act, 1927;

On the first point, the following arguments were put forward.

Even in the present day set-up, the importance of a chief in the hill areas cannot be minimised. The very fact that chieftainship system has not been could not yet be abolished or for that matter, there is no alternative and more effective arrangement to substitute the institution of chief ship in the hill areas reinforces the above submission. It is high time that the government realise this reality by giving legislative sanction. Land ownership in the hill areas is by and large vested in the chief. In order to remove doubt about chief's ownership of the village land in the hill areas it is therefore suggested that amendment to the Manipur (Village Authorities in the Hill Areas) Act, 1956...be made without any further delay. However, the proposed amendment shall be without any prejudice to the existing unwritten powers, privileges and rights of the chiefs in the hill areas.

Secondly, section 19 of the Manipur (Village Authorities in the Hill Areas) Act, 1956, provided for the constitution of a village court, which shall consist of two or more members of the Village Authority to be appointed by the state government. Therefore, it is highly desirable that a chief or chairman, where there is no chief, must necessarily function as the ex-officio presiding officer of such a village court.

³⁶ Memorandum submitted to the Hon'ble Deputy Commissioner, Senapati District, Manipur by the Sadar Hills Kuki Chiefs' Organisation Manipur, Dated October 20, 1986, by the president of the SHKCO, Manipur

Thirdly, in order to ensure proper and effective functioning of the village court, it is necessary to appoint recording secretary of the village authority who will also function as the Secretary of the village court.

Fourthly, the post of secretary should be constituted with a term longer than the members of the village authority (5 years) in the discharge of functions.³⁷

The following specific amendments were proposed:

- a) For every village authority or a group of village authorities, as may be deemed necessary by the state government, there shall be a secretary who shall hold a term of six years, to assist the village authority in any matter connected with the business of the village affairs whenever required to do so, to assist and advice members of the village authorities in connection with the business of the village authority;
- b) The Deputy Commissioner shall, in consultation with the chief or chairman where there is no chief, appoint a person who is not a member of the village authority but who is qualified to be a Panchayat Secretary, to be a secretary of the village authority or authorities, as the case may be;
- c) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, the rights of the chief to the land of the village shall, according to the customary law applicable to him, continue to vest in him, and that he shall continue to enjoy such customary dues from his villagers whether he is ex-officio chairman of the village authority or not;
- d) In the event of a chief being disqualified, on the ground of his becoming a public servant or employee under the District council, to function as the ex-officio Chairman, his legal heir shall automatically become the ex-officio chairman of the village authority;

³⁷ Prayer for amendment of the Manipur (Village Authorities in the Hill Areas) Act, 1956, The Manipur Land Revenue and Reforms Act, 1960 and The Indian Forest Act, 1927 with a view to safeguard the rights of the Chiefs in the hill areas, made to His Excellency, the Governor of Manipur, Dated Churachandpur, the 7th March, 1988, as documented in Ray, 1990, pp. 104-105

e) Section 19 of the principal act should be entirely omitted and its place the following clause should be inserted.

“Section 19: Constitution of the village courts:-

- Whenever a Village Authority is constituted for any village, there shall be a village court consisting of the chief or chairman, where there is no chief, who shall be ex-officio Presiding Officer thereof, and any two or more of the members of the village authority be appointed by the Deputy Commissioner during their term of office as members of the village authority
- There shall be a Recording Secretary for every village court provided that the Secretary of the village authority may also function as the Recording Secretary of such a village court.³⁸

The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act of 1960 did not apply to the Hill areas of Manipur straight away. It was fifteen years in 1975 that the act came to be extended to the hill areas. On the Manipur Land Reforms Act, 1960, the following proposal for amendment has been made. “The State government shall not direct a revenue survey in the hill areas unless it has first obtained the consent of the chief within whose village such area lies.”³⁹

This movement to preserve and protect the institution of chieftainship system is an ongoing process. Recently, the government of Manipur introduced the Manipur Village Authority in the Hill Areas Amendment Act, 2011 under the chief ministership of Okram Ibobi Singh, who also holds the post of Tribal Development Minister. ⁴⁰ The Kuki chiefs' associations have been spearheading the movement in putting the issue of the Act in public domain. A series of mobilization meetings have been underway for sometimes now in the Kuki areas of Manipur entitled "awareness campaign on the proposed "Manipur (village

³⁸ Op cit

³⁹ ibid

⁴⁰ 'Kuki chiefs raise voice against amendment of VA Act,' *The Sangai Express*, April 18, 2011, at <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/fullstory.php?newsid=5124> (Accessed May 28, 2011)

authority in the hill areas) amendment act, 2011, and its effects on the hill tribal lands".⁴¹ During the campaign, Rev. Rihang Chothe observed that the motive of the amendment was to centralize power in the centre and take control of the hills.⁴²

4.4.2 Combative Negotiations with the State: Local Land Based Movements

4.4.2.1 The Sadar Hills District Demand Committee

Given the inability, deliberate and otherwise, of the formal legal and political system to protect the lives and resources of the common person, many have resorted to see 'custom' as the only hope. This paved way for the idea of a homeland and the concept of the need for a 'common space' both ideological and territorial with people who shares the same customs and culture. Below is the accounts of the Sadar Hills District Demand Committee's in its demand for a separate district for all the Kukis of Manipur. The materials are from the records of the committee supplemented by interviews with the President and General Secretary and Local newspaper reports.

The state of Manipur has nine districts, namely Bishnupur, Chandel, Churachandpur, Imphal East, Imphal West, Senapati, Tamenglong Thoubal and Ukhrul, based on the hill district re-organisation after Independence. The demand for the Sadar Hills as a separate state started in 1974. Tengnoupal as Chandel district was the first to undergo bifurcation. This was followed by Bishnupur, Imphal East, Imphal West and Thoubal in 1997.

⁴¹ Op cit

⁴² 'Awareness on Manipur Village Authority Act and its effects spreading in hill areas,' *Imphal Free Press*, April 15, 2011, at <http://ifp.co.in/imphal-free-press-full-story.php?newsid=16295> (Accessed on 28th May, 2011)

The first leaders to lead a separatist movement were the organisation called the Kuki National Assembly.⁴³ The Kuki National Assembly (established in 1946) had submitted a memorandum to the then Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 24 March 1960, demanding the “immediate” creation of a Kuki state comprising all the Kuki inhabited areas of Manipur.⁴⁴ The proposal for a separate state yielded no response from the Government (Haokip, 2011, 223). “The original root of the KNA can be traced back to the formation of the Kuki Chiefs’ Association in about the year 1935-36. The Association was pressing the government for the abolition of ‘*pothang*’ and ‘*beggar*’ systems which were prevailing in the hills of Manipur in the British days (Ray, 1990, p. 112).”

After an agitation organised by Kuki National Assembly turned violent on 22nd November, 1981, the demand was entrusted to another organisation by the name Sadar Hills Youth Organisation. It took the name Sadar Hills District Demand Committee in 1995. The movement was started with the support of different sub-tribes under the Kukis. The constituent members of the Kuki National Assembly were Thadou, Paite, Vaiphei, Gangte, Simte, Zou, Anal, Kom, Hmar, Guite, Chiru, Monsang, Koireng, etc.⁴⁵ It later on became a Thadou-Kukis dominated movement. The District Demand Committee had new members mostly from the Thadou speaking community.⁴⁶

The SHDDC have used protest and dialogue in their dealing with the government. The methods adopted by the Sadar Hills District Demand

⁴³ The leader were-- Pu Z. F. Routhanglien (Pres.), Retd. Major Pagin Kipgen and Pu Paokai Haokip Gen. Secy K.N.A

⁴⁴ Gangte, T.S. 2007. “Struggle for Identity and Land among the Hill Peoples of Manipur.” *Manipur Research Forum*. <http://www.manipurresearchforum.org/struggleidentityhillpeoples.htm> (accessed 28 May, 2011).

⁴⁵ Nabakumar, W. “Ethnic relationship of different communities in Manipur.” *Kukiforum*. <http://kukiforum.com/2007/08/ethnic-relationship-of-different-communities-in-manipur-2/> (accessed 28 May, 2011)

⁴⁶ They were:--Pu Lalkho Kipgen, Ex. MDC (Pres.), Pu Ajang Khongsai (Gen. Sec.), Pu Thangkeng Hangshing (V.P.), Pu Haokholien Guite (V.P.), Pu Lunthang Haokip Secy. Inf. & publicity.

Committee in bargaining with the government were protest and dialogue. Since, land is the cause of disagreement, the Kukis in their demand have faced stiffed resistant from the Nagas.⁴⁷ The Kukis and the Nagas have had a history of inter-ethnic unrest, which reappears again, whenever there is contestant for resources in the state. In 1992, ethnic conflict erupted between the two communities that escalated into a violent conflict. The violence resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives, destruction of hundreds of villages, and displacement of thousands of people. Although the violent conflict had ended in 1997, the conflict continues to remain in different forms of embodiments (Kipgen, 2011).

All Manipur Naga Social Organisation led by United Naga Council call an indefinite economic blockade on National Highway 93& 53 during Chief Ministership of Nipamacha in 1998. This blockade lasted for about 58 days. It had severely affected the state economy. A memorandum of understanding signed between the government and the organisation ended the protest. It states, "no Sadar Hills districts will be created in the absence of leaders of United Naga Council, All Naga Student Union Manipur, Zeliangrong-UN, Thangkhul Long, Naga Women Union etc."⁴⁸ The strong resistance was against the deadline or ultimatum given to the state government dated 30th June 1998 by Sadar Hills District Demand Committee.

The state responses as per the record of the district demand committee has made delusive and false promises to pacify the movement. In 1996, the boundary committee was formed with Shri Dr. Chandramani, Minister I.F.C.D (Chairman) and four other members. Letter from Ch. Birendra Singh, Commissioner (Revenue), Government of Manipur to Shri K.R. Prasad, Secretary Election

⁴⁷ Manipur population has three major ethnic groups: the Meiteis of the valley, the Nagas and Kukis of the surrounding hills.

⁴⁸ Meeting of the SHDDC with UNC (United Naga Council), ANSAM and Manipur Government on 23rd June 1998 on the demand of Sadar Hills as a full-fledged district

Commission of India, New Delhi on the subject of "Inauguration of Sadar Hills District," Dated 11-1-2000, Office order no. 6/1/ 73-R records:

The State Cabinet had taken a decision on 14-7-82 for creation of three districts including Sadar Hills in Manipur to be inaugurated after the boundary adjustment on 10-1-200. The State cabinet had re-affirmed the decision taken in 1982 for creation of Sadar Hills District with the existing three sub-divisions namely Kangpokpi, Saikul and Saitu Gamphazol. Inauguration as decided by the cabinet may be done with the approval of the Election Commission of India.

There was a strong indefinite bandh by Sadar Hills District Demand Committee, during the tenure of Shri Rishang Keishing in which 87 agitators were imprisoned and beaten up by security personnel. The bandh was suspended on the seventh day with the promise by the government to grant a district. On the 12th September 1996, the Revenue Minister Shri Hellalludin had declared in the house assembly during Shri Rishang Keishing's Chief Ministership "the state government is committed to grant sadar hills as a full-fledged district with the bifurcation of Imphal Districts." On March 7th 1997, the then Governor of Manipur Shri Outh Narain Shrivastava, in his address stated "my government is firmly committed for creation of Sadar Hills as a full-fledged district".

However, despite the promises made by the government, no development was happening. Thoubal, Bishnupur, Imphal East and Imphal West were created in 1997. A memorandum was submitted to two Prime Minister Shri H.D. Dewa Gowda and I.K. Gujral. They gave their commitment to give direction to take proper action on the issue. During the Nipamacha tenure of governance in 1998, memorandum submitted had no meaning. He blamed the boundary controversy as being the obstacle to their demand. A sub-committee was formed with Shri Loken Singh (Finance Minister) as Chairman and four others. Therefore, the Sadar Hills District Demand Committee issued an ultimatum until 30th June, 1998. This is where the Nagas' interfered as it challenges their right to self-determination.

In 1998 four Kuki Ministers submitted their resignation from their ministership for failure of creation of Sadar Hill District. They were⁴⁹:--

- Pu Thangminlien Kipgen
- Pu Ngamthang Haokip
- T. N. Haokip
- T.T. Haokip

On 6th November, they withdraw their resignation due to a request from the Chief Minister. The aftermath was that a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between District Demand Committee and the State Government. The government agreed to the following terms:--

1. Full DC⁵⁰ power to ADC Kangpokpi
2. Full SP⁵¹ power to additional SP Kangpokpi

Opening the following department branch office –

- District Industry Centre
- E.E.⁵² Electricity
- E.E. PWD⁵³
- Dy. Director, T. D.
- Divisional Office, horticulture and soil conservation
- District transport officer/ motor vehicle
- Taxation office

⁴⁹ Records in the Documents of the SHDDC, 1998

⁵⁰ Deputy Commissioner

⁵¹ Superintendent of Police

⁵² Executive Engineer

⁵³ Executive Engineer Public Work Department

- Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kangpokpi,
- Necessary action for implementation of District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), shall operates all funds of these two blocks (Senapati and Sadar Hills)
- Deputy Commissioner & Superintendent of Police Powers to Additional Deputy Commissioner & additional Superintendent of Police were not fulfilled.

The Government of Manipur was supposed to expedite its decision on the creation of Sadar Hills (Kangpokpi) district latest by 31st of March in 1999. In 1999 new executive members of SHDDC was formed. Nipamacha government have relentlessly rejected all pleas for the creation of the district. A retaliatory move was the response by boycott of MSCP⁵⁴ in the recent election by the people who constitute the Sadar Hills vote-banks.

A new government under Ibobi Singh, a Congress candidate, took over in 2002. On 29th October 2003, a public meeting of the whole Sadar Hills' chiefs, MLAs, Ex-MLAs, all leaders of social organisations, NGOs etc. was held at Kangpokpi Thomas ground to resort to any form procure Sadar Hills District. On 29th and 30th July 2007, the members of the demand committee of the MLAs of Sadar Hills unit Ministers were Shri T.N. Haokip, Shri Biren, Shri Jagenta and the present Chief Minister Shri O. Ibobi Singh. The process has been underway for converting the ADC mini secretariat into a DC Mini Secretariat though it still needs the approval from the election commission.

The present controversy regarding the committee is its opposition to the implementation of Panchayati Raj Act in the jurisdiction of hill area district council. On September 17 in 2007, a forty-eighth hours total bandh in Sadar Hills area including National Highway 39 and 53 was called with to protest against the failure of the State Government to upgrade Sadar Hills to a full-fledged revenue district and the move being made to hold Panchayat election in the Sadar Hills

⁵⁴ The Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP) is a splinter group of the Congress (I), which formed the government in coalition with the Federal Party of Manipur in 2000.

area. The President of Sadar Hills District Demand Committee Haokholen Guite said that the reason for calling the bandh is due to the imposition of two types of administrations, saying ' we already have District Council and we don't need another administration under Panchayati Raj'. Expressing regret over the alleged failure of the non-Kuki community to respect the agreement signed with the Kuki community settling in mutual harmony in Sadar Hills area in 1974-75, Guite said that the attempt being made by the Government to impose two types of administration in Sadar Hills area is not the right step. This proposed bandh will have a great impact in the whole state as the lifeline of Manipur passes through this Sardar Hills area.⁵⁵

4.4.2.2 Agitation against Uniform Land Policy

The account is based on newspaper clippings between July to October 2010 of a Manipur based Sangai Express and the Memorandum submitted to the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Manipur on overlapping Census Operation, 2011 by CDSU Steering Committee. On 29th July, 2010, a total bandh for 12 hours was called in the hills and tribal areas of Churachandpur, Chandel, Tamenglong and Sadar Hills in Senapati Districts of Manipur by the COPTAM (Committee on Protection of Tribal Areas) and supported by CDSU (Churachandpur District Student Union) and TPFM (Tribal's People Forum Manipur).⁵⁶ Overlapping Census Operation, 2011, redrawing of district boundaries, improper maintenance of tribal land records and dual taxation of the hill-tribes were the main reason for discontentment. Of the five hill districts of Manipur, namely – Senapati (Senapati and Sadar Hills), Churachandpur, Ukhrul, Tamenglong and Chandel, according to the map redrawn by the Manipur Remote Sensing Application Centre (MARSAC), many tribal villages in close proximity are merged with the valley

⁵⁵ The materials are based on the records, documents and proceedings of the Sadar Hills District Demand Committee. Interview was also conducted with –

1. The President – Mr. Haokholen Guite, interviewed on 5th December, 2008
2. Misao, Thangkam, General Secretary of SHDDC, interviewed on 5th December 2008

districts. For instance out of 14 villages within the revenue jurisdiction of Imphal west under Lamshang sub-division, 10 were also found included in the Sadar Hills (Kangpokpi) as per Hill house Tax Payment records of the Hill Department.⁵⁷ The Committee of Protection of Tribal Areas Manipur (COPTAM) is also demanding rectification of overlapping district boundaries in the census operation. The body demands de-linking of revenue collection from the Census operation and district boundary demarcation, and an immediate conduct of Census in the overlapping villages to be carried out by concerned hill districts as was done till 2001 Census.⁵⁸ They are also demanding maintaining of land records in the respective hill districts and collection of land revenues thereof by the concerned hill districts and initiation of constitutional protection of Manipur tribal areas as was done in all tribal areas of North-East India.⁵⁹ Subsequently, bandhs and strikes were frequent as a part of land rights assertion of the hill tribes.

4.4.2.3 Demand for Sixth Schedule

The Sixth Schedule comes under article 189 (b) and 190 (2) of the Constitution of India. "The Sixth Schedule is one of Constitution of India's (1950) ingenious ways of recognising the virtues of asymmetry prevalent in a plural socio-cultural setting. A product of entrenched tradition of isolation and contingent 'special' treatment, it has been devised to provide a simple and inexpensive administrative set-up for the erstwhile tribal areas of Assam (Suan, 2006, p. 3)." In the Constituency Assembly Debates for the Sixth Schedule, Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy opined:

This schedule has given a certain measure of self-government to these hill areas but the laws and regulations to be made by the District Councils are subject to control and assent of the Governor of Assam (as cited in Savyasaachi, 1998, p. 135).

⁵⁷ Memorandum submitted to the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Manipur on overlapping Census Operation, 2011 by CDSU Steering Committee, <http://coptam.wordpress.com/2010/08/27/state-cabinet-to-discuss-census-overlapping/>

⁵⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁹ *ibid*

He continued, “The provisions of the Sixth Schedule satisfy these people to a certain extent and at the same time joins them to the rest of the province (ibid)”. In the same debate, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar express in his speech that:

...barring such functions as law-making in certain specified fields such as money-lending, land and so on, and barring certain judicial functions which are to be exercised in the village panchayats or the Regional Councils or the District Councils, the authority of Parliament as well as the authority of the Assam Legislature extends over the Regional's and the District Councils (ibid, p. 140).

Therefore, the Sixth Schedule has a dual aim of providing both ‘self-rule’ on the one hand and on the other hand ‘integration (of the Tribal's) to the mainstream dominant social order’.

The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971 exemplify an incomplete autonomous structure (Suan, 2006, p. 2). The Act fails to provide legislative and judicial powers to the six Autonomous District Councils of the state (ibid). Under the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971 (formally implemented in 1973), six district councils were established in the hill areas of Manipur. The District Councils in Manipur are fundamentally different from those in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura, which are established under the Sixth Schedule. The difference is that the district councils in Manipur are not entrusted with any judicial and legislative powers but only some executives and financial powers are entrusted to them. The financial power is very limited as government grant is the only source of income for the district councils. They are not empowered to mobilise sources of income. Unlike the district council in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura which are administered according to the provisions laid under the Sixth Schedule to the constitution, the district council in Manipur is administered by the state (Kshetri, 2006, p. 22).

Some important points of distinction between district councils in Manipur are given below in the table:--

No. List of points	District Council under Sixth Schedule	District Councils Manipur
1. Constitutional provisions under which District Councils are Established	Under the Sixth Schedule of the constitution	Under the provisions of the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act
2. Legislative Power	<p>With the prior approval of the Governor, they have the powers to make laws with respect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Allotment, occupation or use of land for agricultural and non-agricultural purposes other than land classed as reserved forests; b. The management of unclassified forest; c. The use of canal or water course for purpose of agriculture; d. Regulation of jhuming or other forms of shifting cultivation; e. Appointment and succession of chief or headmen; f. Inheritance of property g. Marriage; h. Social reform; 	<p>No legislative power Section 52 of the Act provides them only bye-laws making power</p> <p>They can recommend to the Government of Manipur for legislation relating to matters from (e) to (h)</p>
3. Judicial Power	They have powers to constitute village councils or courts for trials of suits.	They have not. The village authorities are empowered for trial of small cases/ litigations under the provisions of Village authority Act, 1965

<p>4. Power to assess and collect land revenue and to impose taxes</p>	<p>They have powers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To assess and collect land revenue 2. To levy and collect taxes on lands and buildings and tolls on persons, and 3. To levy and collect all or 4. any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxes on professionals, trades, callings and employment • Entry of goods etc. • Animals, vehicles and boats; • Taxes for maintenance of schools, dispensaries or roads. 	<p>Does not arise</p> <p>Does not arise</p> <p>They have power to levy and collect these taxes</p> <p>(Source: Kshetri, 2006, pp. 23-24)</p>
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A comparative picture of the two types of district council as given above, makes it quite obvious that the nature and the extent of autonomy given to the district councils under the sixth schedule is different from and more powerful than the ones in Manipur. Moreover, it is the Sixth Schedule which allows for greater autonomy in the structure as well as the functions of the councils (Bhatia, 2010, p. 42). It is, therefore, not surprising for the hill people and the tribal leaders to demand the extension of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur. However, critics of this provision saw it as beckoning the seeds of enmity between the hills and plains people on the one hand and hills separatism on the other (Suan, 2006, p. 3). It was assume to provide advantage for 'separatist' demands thereby endangering the unity and integrity of the state of Assam (ibid). Placing the Sixth Schedule under the dual control of the Union and the state conceptually engenders a split institutional identity; one that draws its identity and sustenance from the executive fiat of the union and the other from the state (ibid).

The demand for the extension of the Sixth Schedule to the hills of Manipur was raised in Hill Areas Committee meeting as early as March 1978. Subsequently, all

District Councils of Manipur formed the Sixth Schedule Demand Committee and it, along with the All Tribal Students Union, Manipur (ATSUM) became instrumental in demanding immediate extension of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur. From the 1980s onwards, the demand for the extension of the sixth schedule has gained momentum and one memorandum after another was submitted by various tribal organizations to the Chief Minister, Union Home Minister and the Prime Minister (Kshetri, 2006).

In April 1989, the All Tribal Student Union Manipur again submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of the same year demanding for the immediate extension of the provisions of the sixth schedule to the hill areas of Manipur. So far, efforts by the tribal leaders and the students have failed to produce concrete results. Several political parties in the last Assembly and the Parliamentary Elections in their respective election manifestoes also highlighted the sixth schedule issue (ibid, p. 25).

In October 1990, the Chief Minister told the Chairman of the Sixth Schedule Demand Committee that the inclusion of the hill areas of Manipur in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution is under active consideration. Protesting against the state government for its apathy to the long-felt demand of the tribals, the Sixth Schedule Demand Committee have called and observed, towards the fag end of November 1990, a 48 hours bandh in the hill areas of Manipur. The state Government on its part came out with a statement by the Tribal Development Minister on 17th December 1990 that the government is trying hard to extend the sixth schedule to the hill areas of Manipur (ibid).

4. 5 Continuity of Traditional Institutions

4. 5. 1 Contemporary Relevance of the Customary Court

Chieftainship system is still functional today despites the fact that much of their power has been reduced by the various Acts of the Government of India. The composition of the assembly undergoes changes according to the new

requirements of the changing times. The office of the Motbung Village Authority (Haosa) in 2009 comprises of the following portfolios--Chairman, Secretary, Joint Secretary, Accountant, Custom, 2 forest in charge, Defence, 4 members and *Lhangsam* or Information Secretary.⁶⁰ The term of the Village authority in Tujung Vaichong is for 2 years each. The members are chosen by the chief and sometimes by the recommendation of the people. The main meeting of the village is not more than twice a year. The other meetings are based on emergencies or according to the requirement of circumstances. The biggest meeting is the *kumlhun assembly* where the administration of the village for the year is discussed. Women have never been elected as members in the village authority.⁶¹

I give below two instances of land disputes decided by the Motbung Semang Pachong or Village Authority in the year 2009.⁶² For the proceeding to take place, the victim's party has to write a letter to the Chief through the Authority members. They also have to pay court case charge of rupees fifty. The Authority leaders hear from both the party and from certain witness who were present at the time the incident occurred. The guilty party being decided, the leaders also negotiate on the fine or penalty to be paid by the party who loses the case.

(Case 1)

This happened around the month of November and continued until December in the locality by the name '*Nazareth Veng.*' A dispute occurred with the neighbouring village called '*Thingsat Village.*' What had happened was that some goats and cows of the Thingsat village had entered and destroyed the vegetable (beans and peas) gardens of about ten houses in Motbung village. The owner of the lands, whose gardens were destroyed complained to the Chief and the Village Authority. In the process, for the proceeding to take place, the victim party had to

⁶⁰ Lhouvum, Vumkhopao, Joint Secretary Motbung Semang Pachong, Interviewed on 14th Oct, 2008

⁶¹ Kipgen, Lalboi, Secretary of Tujung Vaichong Village Authority, interviewed on 20th November, 2008

⁶² Lhouvum, Vumkhopao, Joint Secretary Motbung Semang Pachong, Interviewed on 14th Oct, 2008

write a letter to chief through the authority members. They also have to pay court case charge of rupees fifty. The Authority leaders hear from both the parties and from certain witnesses who were present at the time the incident happened. The guilty party being decided, the leaders also negotiate on the fine or penalty to be paid by them. In this case, the Thingsat villagers, who owned the goats and cows that destroyed the vegetables were imposed to pay rupees 200 per household.

(Case 2)

The second case happened in September of 2009 in the neighbourhood called 'forest veng' in Motbung Village. The conflict was over a big tree that was growing on the side of a river. The person who grew it, a Mr. Kaikhopao and the person on whose land the tree grew, a Mr. Lalkho fought over the ownership of the tree. Lalkho approached the village authority. After conducting several meetings, the cases continued for two month, the case was decided in favour of Kaikhopao who was allowed to keep the tree. The Kuki societies are a sort of gerontocratic system, in which elders are respected. So, it is said that the fact that Mr. Kaikhopao was well advanced in years contributed to his winning the case.

(Case 3)

The third case happened in the month of October of 2009 in a lane called 'Aithuh veng'. Mr. S.L. Seihen sold his land to a Mr. S.K. Thangboi. The conflict happened when the new tenant S.K. Thangboi built a fence around the land that he had newly bought. The man who owned the neighbouring land, Mr. Mangkholen complained that they had also touched upon his land in the transaction. Mangkholen made a case to the authority leaders. The authority leaders had several meetings in which all the three persons were continually called. Moreover, they also went to the site of dispute besides questioning several witnesses. The site of dispute as per the record of the authority leaders was a rocky patch of land. Mangkholen won the case and the S.K. Thangboi handed over the bit of land to him.

Regarding the disputes over boundary lines or landmarks, “*Khaokikai*” is done in which a rope is placed at the site of dispute upon which the Chief deliberates the line of demarcation between the conflicting parties. The disputing parties have to forward a petition to the chief. The chief will summon the village authority who will together set a date. At the said date, the parties are summoned to the court, which is in the courtyard of the chief.⁶³

Usually, as a peace treaty, after the cases are decided, there is a tea-party which includes the members of the village authority, and the conflicting parties. This is a change influenced by Christianity from the traditional practice of drinking local wine called ‘zu.’ Penalty is stringent and heavy in cases that involved bloodshed or adultery, where the highest fine is paid in terms of a pig. Today, a guilty person can pay the equivalent of the price of a pig in cash.

The Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee deals with varied cases that concerns developmental activities around the town, town beautification programmes, make budgets for government projects etc. However, we will concentrate on only land issues that are dealt in the ‘Customary Court of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee.’ The law applies equally to all who approaches the court. Though the committee is under the District Council, the local customary law is recognised and given authority to all those who seeks justice under it. The Customary Court still follows the traditional customary laws in handling cases that are submitted to them. The guilty person are penalised with objects like *dahpi* (gong), *khichang* (beads), *puondum* (cloth) and *mithuns* or *pigs*, depending on the nature of crime they committed. Moreover, practices like *Kosa*, *Tol-theh*, *Sa-lam-sat* and *Hem-Kham* are still observed. The difference is that today the payment can be made in cash unlike the olden days.⁶⁴ The Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee therefore for convenience sake has fixed monetary equivalence of all objects as well as estimation amount for conducting the customary practices. For instance in case a

⁶³ Kaikhosei, S.L., Chief of Motbung Village, Interviewed on 13th October 2008

⁶⁴ According to the KUTC Chairman, Haokholien Guite, *Dahpi* is equivalent to Rupees 15000, *Khichang* to rupees 5000, *Puondum* to rupees 500 etc.

husband divorce his wife, he have to pay *Numei Daman*, which is *Sel Som* (ten mithun).⁶⁵

The Customary Court under chieftainship system as a law enforcing body can therefore be heralded as an institution that has survived the onslaught of external agencies and continue to function within contemporary legal systems.

4. 7 Conclusions

The chapter stated the case of both the Hill tribals as represented by the Thadou-Kukis and the State agencies in the discourse on land rights. After 1947, the administration of the Hill areas passed on from the colonial rulers to the Maharaja of Manipur and finally to the state agencies under the Indian Government.

The various land based Acts are indirect attempts to slowly erode the land ownership of the hill tribes of Manipur as also of the Thadou-Kukis in the name of an uniform land policy. The Manipur Hill Peoples Administration Regulation Act-1947, reduced many chiefs of smaller villages, with less than 20 tax-paying houses, as unrecognised chiefs. For the rest of the chiefs who qualifies the new criteria for a village, a new hierarchy of official control overshadowed the real basis of traditional administration. There were attempts to do away with the traditional tributary privileges of the chief like the custom of '*inpisap*'⁶⁶, '*khulkho*'⁶⁷, '*thapi*'⁶⁸, '*Sukai*'⁶⁹, '*selkotkaiman*'⁷⁰ and '*changseo*'⁷¹. The state agencies likened the chiefs to be like the zamindars in mainland India and presumed their ruling to be dictatorial in nature. The traditionalist viewpoint is that the tributary privileges

⁶⁵ Guite, Haakholien, Chairmen of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Interviewed on 26th November, 2008

⁶⁶ Extra charges taken by Kuki chiefs in certain type of cases

⁶⁷ Building special fence of wooden board for the chief

⁶⁸ A day free labour in a year to the chief given by the villagers

⁶⁹ Bride price

⁷⁰ Cattle price

⁷¹ Basketful of rice paid to the Thadou Kuki chief annually

are not to be regarded as taxes. They are paid to a chief to recognise him as an overseer of all the lands in the villages.

The Manipur Village Authorities in Hill Areas Act-1956 continued the onslaught by reducing the chief of the village that accepts the Act as ex-officio Chairman of the village authority. Moreover, the other traditional councillors' post was no longer hereditary and they had to be re-elected to continue in the post. The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reform Act of 1960 was an ambiguous one. On the one hand it had provisions for protecting the land rights of the tribal like the section 158 which prohibits transmission of land to non-tribals and sub section 2 (1) which excludes the hill areas from the MLR & LR Act. On the other hand, in the six and seventh amendments of the same Act attempted to remove and modify the very section that favours the hill people. Moreover, there is no laws to protect those villages which are in close proximity to the valley districts. The ongoing overlapping land issues and dual taxation of the villages that falls within these areas are examples of the need for laws to protect them. The Manipur Hill Areas District Council Act, 1971 has been widely criticised because it does not provide legislative and financial powers. Consequently, Sixth Schedule which is suppose to provide this powers is demanded by the people.

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'reterritorialisation' suggested the forms of resistance that developed in the postcolonial state as combative negotiations with the state (Young, 2003, p. 52). Similarly, the hill tribes have made demands in the form of protest and negotiations with the state. The State agencies in making laws for the Hill areas have continued the same mistake committed by the colonial rulers, which is an imposition of laws without consideration for the ruled. What gives legitimacy and stability to institutions and laws depends on the internalisation and absorption of these changes in the traditional institutions. In making land laws, reforms and its implementations, only bureaucracy and the state does not suffice, the participation of the people for whom the law is meant is

crucial for the formulation of appropriate laws to suit them. The demand put forward by the people has been for a separate land law that respect the customs and cultures of the locale and enables self-rule in the hills of Manipur.

CHAPTER 5

Woman and Land

5.1 Introduction

North East Indian tribes are often portrayed as egalitarian societies unlike the mainstream Indian society whose culture of women subjugation is evident in their social and religious practices. Most of the tribes of the North Eastern Part of India, except the matrilineal Khasis and Garos, follow the patriarchal system of family structure. The case of the Thadou-Kukis of Manipur is no different. As a result, the line of descent, law of inheritance and law of residence is appointed to the male line only and the children follow the clan name of the father. In the case of no male child, the law of inheritance is passed on through the next closest or nearest male relative of the family. In the present times, there has been a possibility of daughters inheriting the movable property. However, there has been undisputable rule about the transfer of the immovable property especially the ancestral land even in the case when the family has a lone daughter as contender. Like all patrilineal tribal societies, male mediation or patriarchy and dominance of customary practice constrain the degree to which women can exercise the practice in land rights.

The chapter attempts to account for the interplay between gender, religion and local politics by positing the case of the Thadou-Kukis, which challenges many established standards. It attempts to problematise the ambiguous relationship between land and women, common in many agricultural societies and seeks to bring to our understanding of the mode in which patriarchy operates and gets reinforced in the question of women's relationship to land. Inheritance practice in society is highlighted to bring out the gender relationship within family and society related to land in both traditional and contemporary Thadou society. The Church as a principal agency of socialisation is critically analysed to understand its role in empowering women in the society. As an agency that

gave women its first break in having a separate space of their own, it can be said that the church women groupings is a pioneer to the formation of other women organisations at the societal level. An understanding of the various institutions at both the level of traditional and modern socio-political structures is required to understand the processes that are responsible for the status of women in the society.

5.2 The Social Construction of Gender Relations

'Sex' refers to the biological divisions into female and male; 'gender' to the parallel and socially unequal division into femininity and masculinity (Oakley, 1981, p. 41). Theories stressing on the social construction of gender emphasised how we learn the gender roles that relate to our biological sex through our interaction with social structures, such as the family, schools, the media and so on. Women's status in society remains defined by their family functions (both actual and supposed) in a way that does not hold for men (ibid, p. 297). In the family role of women 'mothering' is thus seen as an essential ingredient, its absence pathogenic, threatening the whole purpose of the family---the production of healthy children (Oakley, 1974, p. 69).

Simone De Beauvoir (1953, p. 9) wrote in her book, 'The Second Sex,' that women have in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men; a position comparable in many respects with that of racial minorities in spite of the fact that women constitute numerically at least half of the human race, and further that this secondary standing is not imposed of necessity by natural 'feminine' characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men.

Sherry B. Ortner (1996) discusses the tendency to associate women with 'nature' and 'the domestic unit', and men with 'culture' and 'the public entity.' As the mother role is linked to the family, the family itself is regarded as closer to nature compared to activities and institutions outside the family. Thus

activities such as politics, warfare and religion are seen as more removed from nature, as superior to domestic tasks, and therefore as the province of men. She wrote, "Since men lack a 'natural' basis (nursing, generalized to child care) for a familiar orientation, their sphere of activity is defined at the level of interfamilial relations. And hence, so the cultural reasoning seems to go, men are the 'natural' proprietors of religion, rituals, politics, and other realms of cultural thought and action in which universalistic statements of spiritual and social synthesis are made" (Ortner, 1996, p. 33).

5. 3 Woman and Land Issues in India

Here, I agree with the perspectives that gender roles are product of culture rather than biology. There are many existing literatures and research written on women's rights to land in the wider context of the country. Jassal studies the Manikpur Block, which lies in between Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh to understand how processes of social change have affected women in agrarian societies. She emphasises on the importance of understanding the historical processes by which women have become marginalised or have lost control over land and productive resources (Jassal, 2001, p. 209). Indira studies how land ownership influences women's participation in decision-making. The results show that it is not property rights over land but literacy and occupation that is influential in the context of selected villages in Karnataka (Indira, 2007, pp. 274-275). Efforts towards the empowerment of women should concentrate on improving the literacy levels as well as employment opportunities of rural women (ibid).

Bina Agarwal in studying the issues of gender and land rights in South Asia emphasises on the importance of individual ownership in promoting the well-being and empowerment of women. The book is based on the writer's association with the women's movement in South Asia, her interaction over the years with peasant women from across the region and with few grassroots activists who were raising issue of women's independent land rights within

mass-based peasant movements in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Agarwal, *ibid*, 1998, p. xv). Her interaction led her to her research question, “do women need independent rights in land?” and the recognition of the central importance of women’s lack of effective rights in property, especially land. Land will continue to be the most significant form of property in rural South Asia (*ibid*, p. xv). “The ideological struggle to establish the social legitimacy of women’s claims, so that there is greater acceptance of the idea that women need independent resources, especially land, is likely to be complex one...(p. 483)” “The gap between legal ownership rights and actual ownership is only one part of the story. The other part relates to the gap between ownership and effective control, again attributable to a mix of factors (*ibid*, p. 475).”

Interestingly, the case of matrilineal societies does not paint a very different picture. Even in matrilineal communities, where formal ownership of property (including land) was vested in women, its effective control was often vested in men, as was jural authority. According to Nongbri, the tribal customary laws are not always conducive to the interests of women (Nongbri, 2003, p. 199):

Even in societies that follow the matrilineal principle of descent and inheritance, where the woman is the focal point of the household organisation, when it comes to the allocation of rights over land, a sharp distinction is maintained between ‘ownership’ and ‘control’. While ownership of land is transmitted through women, control invariably lies with men (*ibid*).

The Khasi and Jaintia women have little access to the traditional village and state durbars (councils), which are concerned with public administration and the control and management of their land and forests (*ibid*, pp. 204-205). “Women’s isolation from politics does not only render them subordinate to men, it has also contributed to the persistence of blatant gender bias in development policies (*ibid*, p. 205).”

Kelkar and Nathan wrote about the patrilineal Adivasi communities of Jharkhand. Adivasi custom has a fine gradation of various rights in land that

women in different stations have—rights of unmarried daughters, wives, widows and so on (Kelkar et al, 1993, p. 109). They sum up the whole gamut of women's rights to land as two kinds :--(1) life interest in land and (2) right to a share of the produce of the land (ibid). Witch hunting is attributed as a ramification of the struggle to restrict women's right to land and as an attempt of male agnates to remove the fetters on their property rights posed by widows' life interest in land. Repeated occurrences of the usual tragedies in the village are taken as proof that the witch is unrepentant; and the women may be either driven out or killed (ibid, pp. 114-115). Many survey and studies concluded the destruction of widow's life interest in lands as the immediate economic objective behind witch-hunting (ibid, p. 115). The resistance to the possibility of the land rights of women comes not only from men, but from women too (ibid, p. 112).

Madhu Sarin discusses women's continuing centrality in the use and management of forest resources, the affect of devolution policies on gender relations and women's spaces for forest management in Uttarakhand. As per tradition of the society, the women own or control little of the privately held land, and their forests rights are mediated through the male household head in whose name they are recorded (Sarin, 2003, p. 289). The high migration of men in search of employment reduces the women to be effective managers of the rural household economy (ibid). Both colonialism and Indian government actions have weakened the existing local forest management systems, but this has also broadened the democratic base in creating a space for women and other marginalized groups (ibid, p. 306). "Women have started asserting their rights to participate in community decision-making and defining forest use and management priorities through organized action and struggle within their households and communities (ibid, pp. 306-307)."

Nitya Rao discusses the consequences of kinship ties amongst the Santal community in a village in Jharkhand state of India (Rao, 2005, p. 725). Based on her study, she concluded that women's relationship to their kinship group is

ambiguous. Kinship can simultaneously be both a source of deprivation and suppression and also a way of staking claims to resources, especially in the face of the inadequacies of formal state mechanisms (ibid).

5. 3. 1 Woman Land Rights as defined by the Constitution

Like most tribal societies, the Thadou-Kukis continue to be governed for their property rights by the customs and norms of their tribe. Under the Indian constitution, both the central and the state governments are competent to exact laws on matter of succession and hence the states can, and some have, exacted their own variations of property laws within each personal law.¹ The fundamental rights in Article² 14, 15 and 21 can be used to empower women to get their due rights as citizens of India. In India, the pressure of the women's movement to recognize women's rights to land, and the legitimization of their demands in the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-5), created a fertile ground to take forward this agenda. The Eighth Plan (1990-5) highlighted the need to change inheritance laws to give women equal shares on the one hand, and called upon state governments to allot 40 percent of ceiling surplus land to women, the rest being in joint titles, on the other (Rao, 2008, p. 261).

Denial of right of succession to women of Scheduled Tribes amounts to deprivation of their right to livelihood under article 21. "In the *Madhu Kishwar v. State of Bihar*, there was a public interest petition filed by a leading women's rights activist challenging the customary law operating in Bihar state and other parts of the country excluding tribal women from inheritance to the male heirs

¹ Pandey, Shruti. 'Property Rights of Indian Women,' <http://www.muslimpersonallaw.co.za/inheritancedocs/Property%20Rights%20of%20Indian%20Women.pdf>, (accessed on 1st june, 2011).

Article 14 of the constitution of India states that: "the state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India."

Article 15: Prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth or any of them

Article 21: Protection of life and personal liberty: No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law

or lineal descendants being founded solely on sex are discriminatory. The contention of the petitioner was that there is no recognition of the fact that the tribal women toil, share with men equally the daily sweat, troubles and tribulations in agricultural operations and family management. It was alleged that even usufructuary rights conferred on a widow or an unmarried daughter become illusory due to diverse pressures brought to bear brunt at the behest of lineal descendants or their extermination."³ In the same judgement, the Court declined to be persuaded by the argument, that giving women the rights in property would lead to fragmentation of lands. "The reason assigned by the State level committee is that permitting succession to the female would fragment the holding and in the case of inter-caste marriage or marriage outside the tribe, the non-tribals or outsiders would enter into their community to take away their lands. There is no prohibition for a son to claim partition and to take his share of the property at the partition. If fragmentation at his instance is permissible under law, why is the daughter/widow denied inheritance and succession on par with son?"⁴ Accordingly, it was decided that the tribal women would succeed to the estate of their parent, brother, husband, as heirs by intestate succession. They will inherit the property with equal share with male heir with absolute rights as per the general principles of Hindu Succession Act, 1956, as amended and interpreted by the Court and equally of the Indian Succession Act to tribal Christian.⁵

³ Pandey, Shruti. 'Property Rights of Indian Women,' <http://www.muslimpersonallaw.co.za/inheritedocs/Property%20Rights%20of%20Indian%20Women.pdf>, (accessed on 1st june, 2011).

⁴ Madhu Kishwar v. State of Bihar, Supreme Court Cases, 1996 AIR 1864 1996 SCC (5) 125 JT 1996 (4) 379 1996 SCALE (3)640, <http://www.rishabhdara.com/sc/view.php?case=14063>, (accessed on 1st june, 2011).

⁵ Pandey, Shruti. 'Property Rights of Indian Women,' <http://www.muslimpersonallaw.co.za/inheritedocs/Property%20Rights%20of%20Indian%20Women.pdf>, (accessed on 1st june, 2011).

In another passage in the judgment, the desirability of flexible and adaptable laws, even customary law, to changing times, was emphasised. "The public policy and constitutional philosophy envisaged under Articles 38, 39, 46 and 15(1) & (3) and 14 is to accord social and economic democracy to women as assured in the preamble of the Constitution. They constitute core foundation for economic empowerment and social justice to women and for the stability of political democracy. In other words, they frown upon gender discrimination and aim at elimination of obstacles to enjoy social, economic, political and cultural rights on equal footing. Law is a living organism and its utility depends on its vitality and ability to serve as sustaining pillar of society. Contours of law in evolving society must constantly keep changing as civilization and culture advances. The customs and mores must undergo change with march of time. Justice to individual is one of the highest interests of a democratic state judiciary that cannot protect the interests of a common man unless it would redefine the protections of the Constitution and the common law if law is to adapt itself to the needs of the changing society, it must be flexible and adaptable."⁶

According to Bina Agarwal, The 1956 Hindu Succession Act covered Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains under the definition of 'Hindu' but the same act excluded Indian Christians, Parsis, Jews, and other minority communities (Agarwal, 1998, p. 223). The laws for the Christians differ from region to region for all movable property and by location of property in the case of immovables (ibid). "...Christians from Goa are governed by the Portuguese Civil Code; those from Cochin and Travancore (Kerala) until recently by the Cochin Christian Succession Act 1921, and the Travancore Christian Succession Act 1916, respectively; those in Punjab by the customary laws of Punjab; the Christian

⁶ Madhu Kishwar v. State of Bihar, Supreme Court Cases, 1996 AIR 1864 1996 SCC (5) 125 JT 1996 (4) 379 1996 SCALE (3)640, <http://www.rishabhdara.com/sc/view.php?case=14063>, (accessed on 1st June, 2011).

tribal populations of north east India also by their customary laws; and the rest by the Indian Succession Act (ISA) of 1925 (ibid, pp. 223-224).”

Various Acts have been passed in Manipur after the Britishers left the country: the Manipur Hill Peoples Administration Regulation Act, 1947; the Manipur Village authorities in Hill Areas Act, 1956; the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960; the Manipur Hill Areas Acquisition of Chief's Rights Act, 1967; the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971; and in the local movement for amendments of the Acts. Though all efforts have been made for decentralisation of democracy at the grass-root level, there have never been any women inclusive agendas or any effort for the political participation of women. The District Council needs to take a clue from the Panchayati Raj system (Bakshi, 2010, p. 206) in which not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes.

5. 4 Traditional Customary Law and Woman

To understand the feasibility of gender relations among the Thadou-Kukis, it would be helpful to study the structural arrangement of the society. They follow the patriarchal system of family structure. As a result, the line of descent, law of inheritance and law of residence is appointed to the male line only and the children follow the clan name of the father. Therefore, a male child is always preferred to a female child to continue the line of descent. Only the eldest son remains in the '*Inpi*' meaning the parental house, to look after his parents. However, the permanent type of family system and the accepted one is one in which the eldest son of a family called '*Upa*' lives with his parents along with his unmarried brothers called '*Naopa*' and unmarried sisters. When the younger brothers get married, they move away from their parental house. Similarly, the women folk also move to the house of their husbands at the time of marriage. In the case of '*Chapagam*' (barren fatherhood), the law of

inheritance is passed on to the next closest or nearest male relative of the family, which is the reason why a male child is preferred.⁷

Capt. T. H. Lewin, Deputy Commissioner of Hill Tracts writes that if a man has no sons, his goods fall to his brothers; and if he has no brothers, they revert to the Chief of the tribe (Lewin, 1870, p. 148). The inheritance of property by the eldest brother does not necessarily mean that the other sons are fully denied of any share. It only means that the lion share goes to the eldest son who is a legitimate heir as per the custom. In the case of the extinction of all male lines in the case of close and distant relatives, then sometimes daughters are given. Since such case is very rare, there is no right to inherit property for the woman. It is unfortunate to note that in spite of their tremendous contribution to the family income, they have no right of inheritance. At present also, this is still the general trend though a few thoughtful parents do share their property among daughters and sons (Gangte, 1993).

Women were not attributed an altogether subjugated position in the society. They were also honoured, but in separate domains. According to T.S. Gangte, great importance is given to the relationship of the mother's brother and the sister's son in the society. This has significance in view of the practice of preferential marriage of mother brother's daughter. The "*tucha-sunggao* relationship"⁸ of the Thadou-Kukis is also reckoned from a female line. '*Luongman*' or Corpse Price⁹ is another peculiar system of the Thadou-Kukis. This is the price for a woman when she dies. On her death, the price is given to

⁷ Sitlhou, Hoineilhing, 13th August, 2008. 'Women's Role in the Community: In the Context of Kuki Society,' *Kuki International Forum* in <http://kukiforum.com/2008/08/women-role-in-community-in-the-context-of-kuki-society/> (accessed 31st May, 2011)

⁸ Relationship with one's maternal uncle is considered very important in the traditional Thadou society. The practice has lessened in importance, yet still prevalent. The maternal uncle is responsible to the welfare of his sister's children, so much so that his responsibility sometimes supercede those of the father of the children. He is also given due honour and respect in the sister's household.

⁹ When bride price is paid, it is customary for the father to take only half of the demanded amount at the time of marriage. The balance is to be paid to the bride's family on the decease of bride. This is called '*luongman*' (corpse price).

her family of procreation from her family by marriage, as a token of love and affection between the uterine relatives. This also reveals the important position held by a woman in family life, and the weight age given to propagation of the descent through male line (ibid, pp. 68-69).

Capt. T. H. Lewin writes in 1870, that it was the women who do the entire house work while the men were employed in outdoor activities like hunting, cultivating, war (Lewin, 1870, p. 147).¹⁰ In the household domain, the women do the burdensome chores of carrying the domestic loads. It is an obligation that they should wake up earlier in the morning than the other members of the family.¹¹ In the writings of Mangjel Paokai Sitlhou (Sanajaoba (ed.), 1995, p. 240), we find how women in the past were busy in weaving after the harvesting is over. A Thadou woman who has exceptional knowledge of embroidery technique has a very high reputation in the community. The women in the house were responsible for clothing the whole family. In the process of shifting cultivation, most men were content to perform the more honorary task of slash and burning to clear the area for cultivation, whereas the women were attributed the more monotonous and laborious task of planting, weeding, nurturing and harvesting the crops.¹²

In the system of 'Lom' or 'Lawm'¹³ that was functional in villages in the past, there was also a female 'Lom Upanu'. The Thadou women do not hold any priestly office but there are instances of unofficial priestess or sorcerers. Among the many ceremonies and festivals that they celebrate, *Chang-ai*¹⁴ is one where the Kuki women play the leading role. According to Gangte, the *Chang-Ai*

¹⁰ Lewin used the term 'Cucis' to refer to the Kukis

¹¹ Mrs. Nemjachin, Tujang Vaichong Village, Women Society Secretary Chairmen, Interviewed on 10th November, 2008

¹² Sitlhou, 13th August 2008, <http://www.kukiforum.com/community-articles/articles/411-women-role-in-community-in-the-context-of-kuki-society.html>

¹³ The traditional labour corps in the villages that is common in any Thadou-Kuki villages. The purpose of the grouping is mainly for agricultural activities.

¹⁴ Chang-Ai is a festival performed by a person who harvests paddy much above his requirements for more than a decade and expresses thanks to God for the bountiful harvest.

festival of the Kukis speaks volumes of the important part played by the women of the family (Gangte, T.S., 1993, p. 13).

5.4.1 Land Rights and Women

Bina Agarwal defines 'rights' as those forms of claims that are legally and socially recognised and enforceable by an external legitimised authority, be it a village level institution or some higher-level judicial or executive body of the State (Agarwal, 1998, p. 19). She wrote:

Rights in land can be in the form of ownership or of usufruct (that is rights of use), associated with differing degrees of freedom to lease out, mortgage, bequeath, or sell. Land rights can stem from inheritance on an individual or joint family basis, from community membership (e.g. where a clan or village community owns or control land and members have use rights to it), from transfer by the State, or from tenancy arrangements, purchase, and so on. Rights in land also have a temporal and sometimes locational dimension: they may be hereditary, or accrue only for a person's lifetime, or for a lesser period, and they may be conditional on the person residing where the land is located, say, in the village (ibid).

Chieftainship system plays a pivotal role in the socio-political life of the Thadou-Kukis. It governs the land relationship in the villages. Kate Millet in her 'Sexual Politics (1971)' introduced a new way of using patriarchy. It is derived from the Greek word '*patriarches*' which means 'head of the tribe'. This was central to the seventeenth century debates over the question of the extent of monarchical power. Supporters of absolute rule claimed that the power of a king over his people was the same as that of a father over his family, and God and nature sanctioned this power (Bryson, 2003 (1992), p. 166). Similarly, the Chiefs in the Kuki society were revered like a god and they were believed to have connexion with the gods themselves. Therefore, they were look upon with the greatest respect and almost superstitious veneration, and their commands

are in every case law (Stewart, 1855, p. 625). Therefore, the power for patriarchal domination under the chieftainship system begins with this belief.

Under this system, all lands are in the name of the chief who owns it on behalf of the villagers. The general condition that prevails is that the land within the chieftainship is distributed to the villagers for cultivation and homestead. S.L. Kaikhosei, chief of Motbung village calls this distributed land 'gift-deed'. The rights of the land are through the chief of the village. Those who work on the allotted land are considered the landowner. Landowner refers to those who have rights over the produce or usufructuary rights. Over a period of years, the 'occupancy rights' become 'ownership rights'. However, the land allotted to the villagers cannot be sold. If a family in the village wishes to migrate to another village, the land will automatically return to the chief. The member of the chief's council with the approval of the chief superintend and transact all business matters in connection with the land—cultivation, measurement, collection of tax, etc. When a common land is to be cultivated for Jhumming purposes by a villager, it has to be brought into the knowledge of the Chief for approval.¹⁵ Haokip critiques the chieftainship system of the Thadou-Kukis in that the present land system precludes using land as collateral for credit as lenders cannot take possession of the asset in the event of a loan default (Haokip, 2009, p. 324).

The institution of Chieftainship system administers the two villages of Tujung Vaichong and Motbung in the Sadar Hills Sub-Division of Senapati District in Manipur state. The case is different for the third village that constitutes my field area Kangpokpi that is an urban town. Elected members call the "Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee" governs Kangpokpi, under the District Council of Manipur. The elected leaders follow the traditional customary laws of the Kukis in administering over its population. Land rights of the people are

¹⁵ Kaikhosei, S.L., Chief of Motbung Village, Interviewed on 13th October, 2008

determined by customary laws interpreted not by the chief, but by a more democratic system of elected bodies of the town committee.

Correspondingly, woman land rights in the Thadou-Kuki society is determined by the customary norms of the society. The question of gender relations within the family and women's role and position in the society and the issue of inheritance influence the matrix of the relationship between land and woman. To grasp land allocation procedure at the domestic level, one needs to have a cultural understanding of the role of women in the society. The different kinds of land rights are—Right to ownership, Right to use, Right of inheritance, Right over the produce of the land, Right of the transfer of land and Maintenance right.

5.4.2 Inheritance Laws

With regards to the inheritance of property, women were not and have never been the most preferred section for it. The rules are more stringent where immovable property is concerned. As Susan Visvanathan (1989, p. 1345) had stated in the case of the Syrian Christian household, inheritance customs express the dominant place of the patriarch in the Thadou-Kuki society as well. She wrote:

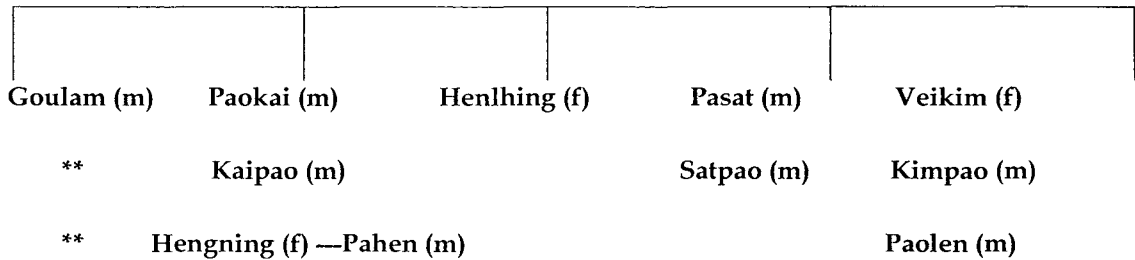
...that right of inheritance are made known very early in life. Small boys glibly say 'the house is mine' or 'that particular land will be mine. Property then does not have the connotation of belonging to 'another' (father or grandfather) because in time it will devolve upon one self and is therefore potentially one's own (ibid).

C.A. Soppitt, the Assistant Commissioner of Burma writes in 1893 in the book, *"A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes: On the North-East Frontier,"* that it is only the male children who can inherit property. In the event of several, the eldest son gets all, and is at liberty to distribute or not to his younger brothers. Girls are sometimes allowed to retain a small portion of any jewellery belonging to the mother, but that is all (Soppitt, 1976, p. 16). William Shaw

explains in 1929 in the book, "Notes on the Thadou Kukis," that the Thadou-Kuki laws of inheritance goes by the male line only and no female has any right to claim as heir of a person, whether male or female.

For example:--

KAIKHU (M)



Lamjasat(m)--Hoinu (f)

Kaikhu has three sons and two daughters, and their children are given as above. Males are shown by (m) and females as (f). The youngest daughter, Veikim is married and has a son called Kimpao who has in turn a son called Paolen. If Paolen dies than Kimpao is his heir. Kimpao's heir is his father and therefore none of Kaikhu's family can claim for Kimpao or Paolen. Veikim has married out of the family and her marriage price, etc., due for her will go to Kaikhu, if alive. If Kaikhu is dead then Goulam is the heir. If Goulam dies then Lamjasat who in turn also eats any dues of his sister Hoinu. When Lamjasat dies then Paokai is next in order and so Kaipao and then Pahen, not Hengning his sister. When their lines becomes extinct for want of a male heir, which is called 'ingam' or 'ingap' in Thadou, then Pasat, and his son Satpao inherit and so on. Henlhing being a female has no say in any claims. If the entire family of Kaikhu becomes 'Ingam,' then the male representative of Kaikhu becomes 'Ingam,' then the male representative of the eldest of his brothers inherits. A younger branch cannot do so until all the senior branches are extinct in the male line (Shaw, 1929, p. 67).

Closer to date, in the nineties, Chongtham Narendra writes on the inheritance laws of the ethnoses of Manipur:

The rule of primogeniture governs the system of inheritance among Thadou-Kukis. The eldest son of the family inherits property of the father. Inheritance goes by male line only and no female has any right to claim as heir of a person whether male or female. In the absence of male issue, inheritance will go to the sons of his eldest brother, and if he has no eldest brother then to his younger brother, or sons. If he has no brother, the property goes to the nearest male line. In this connection, the position will be made clearly by an illustration quoted from P.C. Misao in *History and Customs among the Thadou-Kukis*,

A B C are brothers of the same parents

A has sons X, X1, X2

B has daughters only

C has sons X3, X4, X5

In this case, A will inherit B's property after the death of B. If A dies then by X and if X dies without male issue then to X2 and if X2 dies without male issue, then it passes to C and his male line." This shows that a younger branch cannot inherit until the senior branches are extinct in the male line.

There is no joint family system in a Thadou Society. As such, after marriage the sons used to live separately and independently by themselves. So long as the other brothers live in the house of their elder brother, the eldest brother will own all the properties acquired by their labour. At the time of marriage of the younger brothers, the eldest brother will give all necessary materials for a house so as to enable the younger brother to start off independently. Adoption maybe affected by person, but such an adopted son may enjoy as a son during the lifetime of the adopter. But after the death of the adopter, the next of his kin will never recognise the adopter to be a son of their brother. The inheritance of the office of the Chief was hereditary. In case the Chief dies without male issue, the next of his kin (brother) will succeed and the line of succession goes on to the nearness of blood relationship. Daughters are not counted as heirs (Narendra, 1995, pp. 66-67).

5.4.3 Bride price or Bride Wealth

Items of movable property including agricultural implements and tools, weapons, personal objects like clothing, ornaments, livestock, stores of food grains, and any other item that is considered valuable, is inherited by daughters at the time of marriage. The Thadou-Kuki society practice 'bride price' system. Brideprice and dowry involve the transmission of property between two families who are link by the institution of marriage (Randeria et al, 2005, p. 57). The prestations between affines continue for a span of two generations at least and decrease in amount and number only in the third generation (ibid). Brideprice and dowry can be seen as opposing to one another in terms of the direction of the gift giving is concerned. The former is a transmission of goods from the kin of the groom to the kin of the bride on return for which certain rights in the bride are transferred (ibid). This suggests a usage of the term dowry to mean a 'groom price,' which is the overturn of a bride price (ibid). Dowry can be defined as the property given to the bride by her own kin, to take with her to her husband's family at the time of marriage (ibid, p. 57-58).

As per traditional customary norms, the brideprice was paid in terms of mithuns, copper gongs, ear bead and cornelian bead necklaces. There are variations amongst the different clans of the Thadou-Kukis in terms of kind and number of mithuns. There The basic structures of Brideprice of some of the clans of the Thadou branch of the Kukis as given by Priyadarshini M. Gangte are as given below (Gangte, 2008, pp. 164-165):--

Brideprice Structure of Thadous

CLAN	BRIDEPRICE
1. Doungel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) <i>Selsom</i> (10 Mithuns) ii) <i>Dahpi ni</i> (2 big copper gongs) iii) <i>Dahbu ni</i> (2 sets of three different small sizes of copper gongs) iv) <i>Khichang ni</i> (2 ear beads) v) <i>Khichong ni</i> (2 bead necklaces)
2. Sitlhou	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) <i>Selsom</i> (10 Mithuns) ii) <i>Dahpi ni</i> (2 big copper gongs) iii) <i>Dahbu ni</i> (2 sets of three different small sizes of copper gongs) iv) <i>Khichang ni</i> (2 ear beads) v) <i>Khichong ni</i> (2 bead necklaces)
3. Singson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) <i>Selsomlenga</i> (15 Mithuns)
4. Kipgen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) <i>Selsom</i> (10 Mithuns) ii) <i>Dahpi ni</i> (2 big copper gongs)
5. Haokip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) <i>Khichong ni</i> (2 bead necklaces) ii) <i>Khichang ni</i> (2 ear beads)
6. Chongloi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) <i>Selsagi</i> (7 Mithuns) ii) <i>Dahpi khat</i> (1 big copper gong)

	iii) <i>Dahbu khat</i> (1 set of three different small sizes of copper gongs) iv) <i>Khichang khat</i> (1 ear bead) v) <i>Khichong khat</i> (1 bead necklace)
7. Hangshing	i) <i>Selsagi</i> (7 Mithuns) ii) <i>Dahpi khat</i> (1 big copper gong) iii) <i>Dahbu khat</i> (1 set of three different small sizes of copper gongs) iv) <i>Khichang khat</i> (1 ear bead) v) <i>Khichong khat</i> (1 bead necklace)

T.S. Gangte (1993, p. 95) however, had written earlier that the price of the Singson clans was 30 mithuns in contradiction to the above given table. Many of my informants have ascribed that the rate and materials for brideprice as stipulated for each clans differs from regions to regions. The price is determined by the seniority of the clan to which the bride belongs. Today, the mithuns' in brideprice have attained a more symbolic space, and transaction is done in cash and the price equivalent of the mithuns is negotiated according to the convenience of the affine.

In the past, a daughter could get some of her father's property at the time of her marriage. She is given the following items:--

1. *Phoipi* (a thick cotton mattress),
2. *Sin-khup* (a basket made of cane with cover),
3. *Lel* (a big haversack with a cover which is used like a portable mini-closet for keeping cloths),

4. *Tucha* (hoe),
5. *Heicha* (axe),
6. *Longkai* (haversack),
7. *Kong-vo* (it is a small bag made of bamboo cane for carrying seeds and usually tied around the waist when sowing in the field),
8. *Khiba* (silver earring),
9. *Khi Chong* (necklace made of cornelian beads),
10. *Khamtaang Ponve* (traditional wrap-around),
11. *Saipikhup Shawl* (traditional shawl) and
12. *Thangnang Shawl* (traditional shawl)¹⁶

Gifts given to a daughter at the time of marriage whether ‘bride price’ or ‘women’s wealth’ can have different connotation depending on the culture that practise it. Susan Visvanathan analysed the *Stridhanam* in studying the property rights and domestic relationships of the Orthodox/Jacobite Syrian Christians of Kerala (Visvanathan, 1989). “*Stridhanam* is a prestation of a very large sum of money (often running into lakhs of rupees) made by the father of the bride to the groom’s father. It expresses the fundamental severing of economic ties for a woman from her natal home, and her incorporation into the conjugal household. She no longer has a share in her father’s property (ibid, p. 1341).” At the time of marriage, the bride is accompanied by possessions including utensils, furniture and bed linen. It was considered a question of *maanam* (self-respect) that she came with such goods into her new house (ibid, p. 1342).

Amongst the Thadou-Kukis, the gifts given to a daughter at the time of marriage are elements that are highly valued in the society. They are basic

¹⁶ Haokip, Letkhomang, Reseach Scholar, JNU & Kipgen, Luntinsat, cultural specialist , interviewed on 21st Feb, 2010

rudiments with which the newly couple can start a new life. The inclusion of agricultural implements is due to the context in which they have been given. It shows that the Thadou-Kuki society from the pre-colonial days has been largely an agricultural society, so these tools are the minimal pre-requisites for subsisting and starting a new home. The brideprice is not allowed to be paid in full at the time of marriage. A part of it is kept as due to be paid in the future (Gangte, 1993, p. 95). The connotation is to show that transaction has an underlying symbolic value, which transcends its economic functions of transferring property. The hidden implication is that man should always have a continuing obligation, love and respect for his wife and her relatives (ibid). Today, wealthy father's gives items like cot, almirah, utensils, television, household furniture etc, and even house and land (Mairembam, 2007).

5.4.4 The Significance of Land as Property

What are the values that land signifies in the past and the present Thadou-Kuki Society? The most common answer I receive from the three villages that I have visited was that; it signifies 'security', 'investment capital' and a 'status symbol/marker.' Land has both economic as well as its political and symbolic importance. It is a productive wealth creating and livelihood-sustaining asset. Traditionally land has been considered the basis of political power and social status. It also provides a sense of identity and rootedness within the village, and consequently, in people's minds land often has a durability and permanence, which no other asset possesses (Agarwal, 1998, p. 17). The Thadou-Kuki society also ascribes similar importance to land. In fact, until today it still has the highest prestige among all forms of immovable property. Broadly, we can categorise individual household owned land under two types: ancestral land and acquired land. Ancestral land, as the name suggests, is passed down to the male line from generation to generation. Acquired land on the other hand, is land obtained by purchasing by an individual. In the process,

land can be reclassified as ancestral land when it is passed down to the children of the one who has acquired it (Shimray, 2009, p. 249-250).

In addition, inheritance systems often have different rules for the devolution of ancestral and self-acquired land.¹⁷ The ancestral land is a highly valued and a sacred entity for the Thadou-Kukis in particular and the Kukis in general. Even only daughters are not allowed to inherit it except if they marry into the same clan. The land, in accordance with the customary rules should go to the closest male relative who is next in line. This shows the importance attributed to ancestral land and is based on the idea that the land should be confined within the same family and not passed on to another clan. A daughter in the family from the moment she is born represents another clan. The locution '*numei phungmang*' meaning a girl will lose her clan, '*numei miphung chang ding*' meaning she will belong to another clan and '*numei phung ki hellou*' meaning a female (generally implies to daughter in a family) clan is obscure before her marriage.¹⁸ In any case, ancestral land usually has a symbolic meaning which acquired land does not: within some village communities, continuity of ancestral land also stands for continuity of kinship ties and citizenship; in some others it has ritual importance; and so on. The phrases as '*kapu-kapa gam*' (my ancestors' land) and '*kapu-kapa gou*' (my ancestors' property) is very common among the Thadou-Kukis.¹⁹ Hence, in land disputes, people are often willing to spend more to retain a disputed ancestral plot than its market value would justify.

The significance of land is paramount in societies that depend highly on oral tradition to understand their history. Land has a history in itself and a compact piece of land can be a connecting link to one's ancestors or ancestral history. Sometimes a plot of land tells many stories; valour, wars or superstitions. In

¹⁷ Lhouvum, Kailal, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, interviewed on 12th October, 2008

¹⁸ Singson, Haotinlien, Imphal, Manipur, interviewed on 29th Jan, 2010

¹⁹ *ibid*

Vaichong village, which constitutes one of the three villages that I visited as part of the requirement of field study, the Village Church is an important historical monument. Though simple in structure, the building was the first Kuki church built in 1916 through the initiative of the American Baptist Missionaries.²⁰ It is a landmark to the beginning of a society in transition.

Parallel customary tradition exists in the Solomon Islands of the South Pacific Ocean. Raymond Firth studies the Tikopia, a Polynesian society in the southernmost of the Solomon Islands.

Women occupy a peculiar position in regard to the holding of land in Tikopia. They have an interest in the lands of their father and this interest they pass on to their children, but the inheritance goes no further than this. Strictly speaking, it is not inheritance, for the death of the mother obliterates the claim. It can be best described as an interest only in the land and not a clear title to it; the land is held in perpetuity in the male line (Firth, 1957, p. 391).

The allotment is made only on the day of her marriage and is not pre-determined (ibid). The orchard of the woman, which came with her at the time of marriage remains with her only while she is living (ibid, p. 393). It remains alienated from her father's family only for the duration of her life (ibid, p. 392). As per the norms of the society, the orchard will revert back to her parental family when she dies. However, there are certain exceptions to the rule (ibid).

5. 5 Women Organisation

In all the three field areas²¹ – Tujang Vaichong, Motbung and Kangpokpi, there were two types of women leadership in the village. One is the religious

²⁰ Kipgen, Konkhochong, Chief's Mother/acting Chief of Tujang Vaichong Village, interviewed on 19th Nov, 2008

²¹ The Chapter is based on my fieldwork in three areas of the Sadar Hills Sub-division of Senapati District of Manipur namely - Tujang Vaichong, Motbung and Kangpokpi Town. Senapati District is one of the nine districts of Manipur and lies in the North-West of the state. The hill areas of Manipur are not covered under the Sixth Schedule of the constitution, but under a state legislation, the Manipur Hill Areas District Councils Act, 1971.²¹ This Act

grouping within the church called the 'Women Society' and the other is the more secular yet welfare related association called the 'Women Union.' In each of the three villages, a women's union and a women's society is studied. The women movement that is mentioned is not a large-scale one per se. It is not a conscious effort at liberating the status of women in the society, but an important beginning to challenge the age-old status quo of power relationships in rural settings.

5.5.1 Methodology and Objectives

The interview questions are framed around the issues of women's land rights in the Thadou Kuki society; what hinders their access to land, what are the institutions that directly or indirectly support the patriarchal hegemony over land and what is the effect of religion in the relationship between land and women in society? The study is based on an initial stage of participant observation in selected settings: the church, meetings and activities of women organisations, social gatherings like funeral, celebrations or the scene of the agricultural field. The data on traditional customary laws, women status and role, inheritance and property issues are derived from colonial writings and published secondary works. Oral history and local narratives are derived from the older populace and cultural specialists from the field. A study was done on the women organisations functioning in Tujang Vaichong Village, Motbung Village and Kangpokpi hill urban. As already mentioned, there are usually two types of women leadership in the village: the women society (church) and the women union (societal level). In each of the place, the women society group belonging to the biggest church and the most effective women organisation at the societal level is studied.

Unscheduled interview is done on women leaders, selected members of the organisation, church leaders and executive members of the village authority.

established six autonomous district councils in Manipur, covering five districts. Senapati district has two autonomous district council – Senapati ADC and Sadar Hills ADC.

Preference is given to respondents who are educated, socially aware and holding leadership position or playing an active role in the church or the society. The Chief's record book and those of the church are studied to analyse the level of women's participation in administration. The questions evolve around the subject matters like: possibilities of ownership of land by women, mode in which women gain access to land, roles played by women organisation in society and church, the level of influence the women organisation has on the overall administration and inheritance issues in contemporary Thadou-Kuki society.

5.5.2 Structure of the Women Organisations

Tujang Vaichong: In Tujang Vaichong, the women wings' of the Baptist Christian Church has been functioning ever since 1937. One interesting feature unique to Tujang Vaichong village is not only the presence of a female chief, but also the fact that the influence of the female chief on the status of women in the village. The chief, Mrs. Konkhochong Kipgen, is acting on behalf of her son who is working as a government employee in another state. Unlike other villages, the women are visibly more confident and empowered, which is evident from their assertive attitude and responsiveness when asked on certain issues that required their opinion. However, as per the record of the village administration, there has never been a case in which women are elected as a member of the village council that assists the chief in administration of the village.

The authority structure of the women society has three main apex bodies—the Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer²² and another set of leaders in each of the four localities. Each locality has another set of leadership bodies like chairperson for each group. The name of the group is similar to the names of women in the Bible.²³ Their work is related to welfare related activities in the

²² Chairperson (Mrs. Kimneng), Secretary (Chingthem) and Treasurer (Themkhonei)

²³ Mary, Ruth, Martha etc.

name of church. Their area of jurisdiction falls within all that takes membership in the church.

The authority structure in the Women's Union has four main apex bodies. Their area of jurisdiction falls within a wider network and encompasses the whole of the community or the territory that marks the village. They play an important role in maintaining peace and security in the village within and against external factors. Their role includes – maintaining peace and solving issues related to insurgency problems and negotiating issues with the army personnel. They are able to solve situations, which means danger if men are involved. Within the villages, they deal with deviance that obstruct normalcy like disputes and disturbances caused by vices like drinking and gambling. They put a ban on selling of liquor, which they call '*Nisa Ban*' taken from meitei language of the valley people in Manipur.

Motbung: The Motbung Baptist Church or the Thadou Baptist Church, the main church in Motbung, was established on 1st January 1944. There are about 22 posts in the Women Society like Chairperson, Secretary, Accountant, Treasurer, Executive members, lane leaders: two representatives for the big neighbourhood and one for the small ones. The movement had started in 1984. All the women members in the church are directly recruited as society members. The executive members of the women society are selected based on election, which involve all the women members in the village. Interestingly, the men do not participate in these elections. Though there are other churches in the villages, the women society of the Motbung Baptist Church or Thadou Baptist Church is the most influential. Two reasons could be attributed to it; it is the pioneering church in the village with the highest membership and the chief of the village is a member of it.

The women leadership has no say in the administration of the village. Their only arena is in social welfare activities like taking care of the orphans, refugees from ethnic conflicts, the poor as well as emergency cases in the villages caused

by death or accidents. The women society leaders who take the initiative to collect it from the villagers provide the dead in villages with enough woods and rice. The organisations are self-supporting. Unlike Tujang Vaichong, there is no separate organisation of women in the secular sphere. Therefore, the women society in Motbung is the most influential one.

Kangpokpi: As Kangpokpi has about 17 churches in all, I have selected the Kangpokpi Christian Church to represent all the women society in town. Each church has their own women's wing called the Women's Society. Women members in the church elect executive members. In any Thadou-Kuki or Kuki churches, the '*khut sip*' or collection of grains of rice is an important tradition started when monetary transaction was not common. It has become a financial support means for many churches. Their functions evolve only in the maintenance and growth of the church. Their duties include tending to sick and families of the death in society.

At the societal level, there is only one women organisation operational viz., Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation (KWWO) as the main organisation. All the 15 wards in Kangpokpi elect 2-3 executives as representatives. They are obliged to attend meetings. Their leadership can be annulled if they fail to attend 2 consecutive meetings. They are elected based on their personality; eloquence in speech and someone who can interact with people from all spheres of life and reflecting on the choice of the people. An educated person is preferred for the secretarial post. The tenure of their leadership is three years and the present leadership will end in the year 2010.

5.5.3 Participation in the Customary Court

What J. Meirion Llyod writes about the male biased locutions of the Mizos in Mizoram, "a woman's mind does not reach across the stream", "neither Crabs nor women have any religion", "a fence can be changed; so can a wife," is relevant to the Thadou-Kukis (Lloyd, 1991). According to Mangkhosat Kipgen (1997), in the social organisation and village administration women have no

place, except under special circumstances where the widow of a deceased chief might rule over the village on behalf of her minor son until his maturity. The society is male dominated. In community matters, women are not consulted, and if they volunteer, their opinions are not given weight. It is a role, which sees them as the centre of domestic life but not in fact active participants in the kinds of decision-making positions (Lloyd, 1991). This concept also becomes the basis for other arrangements at the level of the family, the community and the society as a whole. These gender prejudices are reflected in the political space of women in the society. Women have little access to power and autonomy either in the traditional customary form or in modern democratic governance. This is evident from the study of the women organisation in Tujang Vaichong, Motbung and Kangpokpi.

Tujang Vaichong represents a slightly different case, as the chief, a woman in her eighties administers the village in place of her son who is a government employee and is out stationed. Despite the fact that a woman has never been a member of the village customary court, the presence of woman leader is an uncommon element and might sensitise the village court proceedings towards its women folk. There is very limited interaction between the women leadership and the Motbung Village authority leadership. The Chairperson S.H. Neithem²⁴ says that they are called to intervene in the proceedings only in cases that really require them. An example is when they deal with village members who have violated the law of the village by selling liquor. The women leaders in such situations are requested to suspend them from membership in the society or church. This is a matter of great shame for the convicted person and bears a stigma. The women leadership have no say in the administration of the village.

Regarding the Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation's area or power of jurisdiction, they have their own resolution. They have specific areas of concern

²⁴ Neithem, S.H., Chairperson of Women Society, Motbung Baptist Church, interviewed on 14th October, 2010

that is clearly demarcated from the areas of the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee (KUTC) like the cases that handle immoral women who have been arrested by the town committee. Nevertheless, when the case involves murder or bloodshed of any form, this is given over to the KUTC even if the concerned person approaches the Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation first. Besides the above cases, they deal against illegal activities like liquor selling or problems created by the armed forces or the under ground militants. The leader of the Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation is often more effective than the KUTC (mostly male representatives) in such cases. On the question of the extent of their influence in the authority structure of the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, the KWWO president and secretary are invited to attend meetings on community issues.

The KWWO president in Kangpokpi opines that there is a need for women to be elected as member of the town committee. She says that ever since its inception, it has never had a woman member. Since local justice and custom, especially one that is governed by a patriarchal system is bound to defy women's rights, the present president says that she had brought up the need for women representation in the leadership, but people have ignored her suggestion. She as representative of the KWWO has brought up the need for reservation of women in council election. Society, which is used to the old custom, was not ready to accept the change. Their lack of participation or representation in the political sphere could be the reason for the rigidity of patriarchal norms until today.²⁵

Chieftainship System exists in both Tujang Vaichong and Motbung Village. The Chief governs the land relations in the village and distribute the community land and the resources in the villages. The elected members of the village authority assist the village chiefs in their administration. The chief nominates the members of the village authority. They preside over cases like land disputes

²⁵ Haokip, Hechin, President of Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation, interviewed on 27th December, 2009

and conflicts in the village that are brought to the court. The judgements are done based on the customary laws and traditions that are orally transferred from generation to generation. In both Tujang vaichong and Motbung, the village records show that there has never been any women elected as members of the village authority. Even in Kangpokpi, which have greater population and better infrastructure and amenities, there has never been a woman representative in its main governing body, the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee.

5. 6 Women Access to Land

The Thadou women's access to land depends on the different station they are placed in life as unmarried daughter, married daughter, wife, mother and widow. In most cases, we find that women's access to land is through the mediation of a male member of the family – father, brother or husband.²⁶ "...Women do not inherit land as a right, but are entitled to it in special circumstances (Rao, 2005, p 737)." In the pre-colonial days, it was dishonour for a father to hand over his core assets to a daughter due to '*in-gam*' or '*chapa-gam*' (barren father-hood).²⁷ Therefore, in cases like this, a father would rather pass on his property to a close male relative or even to a loyal slave.²⁸ It is only a recent development that land has been gifted to daughters in a family. It should be noted that this land transfer is possible only for land acquired by the parent during their lifetime and not on ancestral land. Sometimes land is gifted to an unmarried daughter to increase her marriage prospects or to cover up for her physical deformity or disability. The purpose is to increase her bargaining power and value in her new home. A daughter may also be given a plot, smaller than what her brothers' get, out of which she could maintain herself if

²⁶ Vumkhopao, S.L., Joint Secretary of Motbung Semang-Pachong Village Authority, interviewed on 14th October, 2008

²⁷ Kipgen, Luntinsat, Cultural Specialist, interviewed on 21st February, 2010

²⁸ The well-to-do Thadou families in the pre-colonial days were in a habit of keeping slaves who were mostly captives from wars and raiding

she remains unmarried.²⁹ This was common in the days when monetary transaction was non-existent.

Among the Adivasi communities of Jharkhand, the situation in which women has the most comprehensive land rights, on par with men, is when she is married in '*ghar jawai*' form, i.e., where the husband comes to reside in the women's home, i.e., matrilocality and not according to the normal patrilocal rule (Kelkar, et al., 1991, p. 111). The girl then inherits the land on which the couple live. Recent developments show parallel trends with among the Thadous in which single daughters live in the parental house with her husband and subsequently inherit the land on the decease of her parents. These type of husband are called '*tupa sungkhum*' derived from the word '*tu-pa*' meaning 'son-in-law' as also 'grand-son' and '*sungkhum*' meaning 'bring in.' The fact that the society is not able to accept this reversal of patriarchal practice is evident in the way they are duped to be hen-peck or spineless by people.³⁰ In this, the daughter has ownership right though not fully legitimised by the society.

In my interviews of the women leaders in my field area³¹, all of them testify to the fact that women are not encouraged to participate in decision making regarding land by their husband or other members of their relatives. From the society's point of view, the husband generally is seen as the head of the family. If the family owns a piece of land, the title is always in the name of the husband. Widows in the Thadou-Kuki society enjoy maintenance right during her lifetime. A widow also represents a sign of vulnerability in the society. In fact, the life interest of widow in her husband's land is the right that has been most under attack and in which there have been numerous changes. One informant, Mr. Satkhokai Chongloi shares his own experience. His aunt

²⁹ Neithem, S.H., Chairperson of Women Society, Motbung Baptist Church, interviewed on 14th October, 2008

³⁰ Singson, Haotinlien, Imphal, Interviewed on the 29th January, 2010

³¹ The three areas of Sadar Hills Subdivision of Senapati District of Manipur that I have visited had each two women wing – the Women Society (Church) and Women Union (Society) and the Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation (KWWO) that I had in my fieldwork-I had interviewed the office bearers of the organizations.

(father's sister) got divorced and having no place to stay, she came back to her parental house. She then lived separately with her daughter. They lived through the paddy field that was in her possession. By the customary laws of the Thadou-Kukis, a women divorced by her husband becomes the responsibility of her father or brother. This responsibility includes the duty to bury her dead body in case she does not have a male child. However, at the time of her death, all her immovable property reverts to her family of the informant's family, as she did not have a son.³²

Women's Access to land is a sensitive issue. The strategies that women adopt to claim land often meet with opposition. Because women's ties to land are mediated by their relationship to men in patrilineal societies, women's attempts to assert their rights in ways that challenge customary land tenure systems is often perceived as an attempt to disrupt gender relations, and society more generally. In the Thadou-Kuki society, customary rules have the effect of excluding females from the clan or communal entity, which rules then serve to exclude females from ownership. Attempts by women to control property, especially land, are considered by the community as misbehaviour.³³ Nitya Rao writes about the Santal women in the two villages of Dumka district, Jharkhand. Notions such as, "Good women should not claim a share in the inheritance, even if they have no brothers" have given the women in the Santal Parganas the resolve to wrest what is rightfully theirs (Rao, 2008).

The threat of women gaining power through property ownership makes society frown upon women who go ahead to acquire property of their own. 'Proper women' are supposed to be satisfied with males being the providers in their lives, and they take whatever is given to them with gratitude, and teach their

³² Chongloi, Rev. Satkhokai, D.Min, Deulahland, Imphal, interviewed on 20th March, 2010

³³ Guite, Haokholien, Chairman of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee (Interviewed on 26th November, 2008)

daughters to do the same.³⁴ The logic of customary law is grounded in village life and considers communal family interest rather than individual rights.

With the passage of time and the introduction of education system, there has been a possibility of the daughters inheriting the movable property. However, there has been undisputable rule about the transfer of the immovable property especially the ancestral land even in the case when the family has a lone daughter as contender. The traditional customary stance is that an ancestral property cannot be transferred to another clan name. The only alternative to the rule is that the daughter marries someone from the same clan.

A woman informant,³⁵ who is also the '*mounu*' or daughter-in-law for the family in whose house I stayed during my fieldwork in Motbung village narrates the case of a family who had disputes over the issue of inheritance. The incident happened in the 14th of October 2008.

A family had only two daughters. Upon the decease of the father, the uncle's son took over the ancestral land and even the paddy field, which was the source of livelihood for the bereaved family. Such family is called '*chapa-gap*' or '*in-gap*'.

Another example is the case of the family of Sonlien whose residence was just three blocs away the place where I had stayed during my fieldwork in Motbung village.

The late Songlien's house was a pucca house, one of the grandest and biggest in the whole village. He had four sons and two daughters. According to the law of primogeniture, *Sehkhothang*, the eldest son inherits the ancestral house. He had two sons and four daughters. A tragic incident happened in the family. The premature death of *Sehkhothang* was followed by the death of his two sons. This created a pandemonium situation in the family. The daughters were not allowed to inherit the ancestral house. The house will remain with them only in the

³⁴ Haokip, Hechin, President of Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation, (Interviewed on 27th December, 2009)

³⁵ Lhouvum, Boisi, Motbung Village, Interviewed on 13th October, 2008

lifetime of the mother. After that, it will go to the next in line, who, in this case would be the sons of the next son of Songlien, Mr. Ngulkhohao. The daughters can inherit the other property both movable and immovable property. Therefore, the case is a bit different as compared to the previous one, which debarred the widow and her children from all rights to any landed property. In the second case study, it is only the ancestral land, which is questionable.

The table below would enable us to understand the incident more plainly:

Family tree of Mr. Songlien

Songlien had four sons and two daughter	
Sehkhothang (eldest son)	Sehkhothang had two sons and four daughters. When the two sons died, the daughters are not allowed to inherit the ancestral house. The house will remain with them only in the lifetime of the mother. After that, it will go to the next in line, who, in this case would be the sons of the next son of Songlien, Mr. Ngulkhohao. The daughters can inherit the other property both movable and immovable property.
Ngulkhohao (second son)	Ngulkhohao sons will now inherit the ancestral property.
Lunkhothang (third son)	-----
Ngullien (fourth son)	-----
Letneilhing (daughter)	-----
Chongkholhing (daughter)	-----

Mrs. Hechin Haokip, president of the women organisation in Kangpokpi (Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation) on the issue of inheritance (especially ancestral land) rights for women of the family asserts that though strictly opposed by customary laws in the beginning, there have been changes in the society. With the society becoming more educated and individualistic, customary laws' grip over household issues has lessened. It becomes more of

an individual personal choice of what they want to do with their property. Though still minimalist in ratio, there have been exceptional cases of family handing over immovable property rights to their daughters. She cites the case of the owner of a reputed school in Kangpokpi who distributes his land between his two daughters.³⁶ However, in situations like this, if the person next in line to inherit the land, viz, the uncle's son makes a case to the customary law court, the court in accordance with the traditional norms of customs and culture of the Thadou's will have to judge in his favour.³⁷ The concerned customary authorities deal with cases such as this on the condition that the villagers submit the case to them. Since the customary law favours male rights over ancestral land, the settlement is often bias towards them. Thus, we see that the inheritance law goes hand in hand with the patrilineal values that govern the social structure.

In order to understand 'land rights' and 'women access to land'; we also need to understand the institutions that have autonomy over the social life of the people including land relations. The influence of the Church is studied to understand its role in either hindering or supporting women's access to land.

5. 7 The Church

Religion is a part of culture but has autonomous power to influence most elements of culture complex. Ursula King offers a partial definition of feminist theology. According to her, "Feminist theology is deeply rooted in women's experience; it is marked by commitment and oriented toward personal and social transformation, toward praxis, and in turn, much theological reflection arises out of such praxis. Feminist theology has been called an advocacy theology concerned with the liberation of women from oppression, guided by the principle of seeking to achieve full humanity of women. In a Third World context feminist theology expresses itself as a liberation theology in a much

³⁷ Guite, Haokholien, Chairman of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, (Interviewed on 26th November, 2008)

stronger sense, as it develops within situations when the oppression of women and the denial of their full humanity often occur on a much larger scale and to a greater degree than in the First World (King, 1994, pp. 3-4).” Women from the Third World countries therefore, stressed on the importance of their own struggle and efforts to achieve their own liberation while at the same time participating in movements for the political and economic liberation of their own countries (ibid, p. 3).

Christianity came to the Thadou-Kukis’ in 1912 and resulted in a large number of baptisms in 1914. The massive conversion to Christianity occurred only after the defeat of this tribe in the Kuki Rebellion (1917-1919) or the Kuki War of Independence (Downs, 1971). They were the second tribe to accept Christianity in Manipur (ibid, p. 167). Though the Arthington Aborigines Mission initially sponsored the first missionary William Pettigrew,³⁸ he switched to the American Baptist Mission with whom he was associated for all his missionary years. Therefore, the pioneer foreign mission amongst the Thadou-Kukis in the north west of Manipur was the American Baptist Mission.

5.7.1 The Woman Character in the Bible

The primary source of authority for Christians has always been the Bible. It is on biblical texts that Christian attitudes to women are based. “Attitude to the position of women in Christianity, therefore depend first on which biblical texts one chooses, then on how one reads the Bible and how much weight is given to the contents in which it was written (Drury, 1999, p. 31).” In the Thadou-Kuki society, the early converts, especially those who could not read or write or memorize the scriptures. Alice Pettigrew in a letter written to Miss Mabel Rae Me Veigh, Foreign Secretary of the Woman’s American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, writes about a Kuki women who entered the Annual Scripture Examination in September of 1923. She writes:

³⁸ A mission founded by Robert Arthington, a millionaire at Leeds near London.

One Kuki women especially distinguished herself by knowledge of the stories of the Old and New Testament, and of her memorizing of the many Golden Texts. This woman, a widow, can neither read nor write (Pettigrew, as cited in Zeliang, 2005, p. 97).

Justification of women secondary position in the society and the church is explained by means of the creation theory in the Bible. The apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9:

For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man (as cited in Drury, 1999, p. 34).

The other biblical references that have been popularly quoted to, "... keep women in secondary role in Christianity, subordinate and obedient to men: 'Wives be subject to your husband's as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church' (Ephesians 5:22-23, cf. also Col. 3:18); 'and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited' (Titus 2:4-5). They had to be quiet and submissive in public, and were denied the authority to teach and preach to men: '...the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate even as the law says' (1 Cr. 14:34, cf. also 1 Tim. 2: 11-12) (Drury, 1999, p. 55)."

In an already patriarchal society, the text or selection of it is looked-at through that lens and receive in that framework. In many cases, the text is taken in uncritically without referring to the social, cultural or religious context in which they were written. This becomes the dogma through which gender relations in the church and the society is arranged.

5.7.2 The Missionary Women as Role Model

For Guelke and Morin, "Female missionaries and communitarian women is particularly interesting because their spatial practices depart significantly from

traditional domestic and workplace norms for women and also because these groups skilfully combine spatial and religious concepts to create enlarged spheres for women's activity (Guelke et al, 2007, p. 105)." The American Christian missionary women in the nineteenth century negotiated conventional gender norms that ideologically and materially restricted the movements of middle-class women and confined them to the comfort of their homes, and once "in the field" in the midst of unfamiliar societies, missionary women faced the prospect of either re-inscribing the conventional standards for femininity and space in their new location or else of negotiating new norms for women's "proper place" in a given society (ibid, p. 106). Missionary women in cultural contact zones had opportunities to produce space and negotiate geographical scale in order to pursue their religious and personal goals (ibid, p. 105).

Some of the prominent foreign missionaries who served in the hills of Manipur were-- Rev. William Pettigrew and Mrs. Alice Goreham Pettigrew, Dr. Galen George Crozier and Mrs. Mabel Borsworth Crozier, the Rev. & Mrs. M.M. Fox. Dr.& Mrs. Werelius, Dr. & Mrs. E.E. Brock, Dr. & Mrs. J.A. Ahlquist, Dr. & Mrs. J. S. Anderson (MBC, 1997, p. 26). The wives of these missionaries worked among the women and brought about substantial changes in the norms affecting women. They were missionary wives 'in the field' who kept houses for their husbands in mission stations, to more autonomous women who managed mission schools, hospitals and the economic means to operate them (Guelke et al., 2007, p. 124). Alice Pettigrew was the main emancipator of women's education in Manipur. She also imparted to the girls the art of better handicrafts known to them traditionally and a hygienic way of living (MBC, 1997, p. 5). Mrs. Mabel Crozier was involved in starting an orphanage for children who lost their mothers at birth. An orphanage was started with some local widows as helpers but Mrs. Crozier herself cared more for the children by taking them on her laps and feeding them herself (ibid, p. 7). The Missionaries also set certain standards of living. The Croziers were of fundamental

background and believed in clean living, spiritually and physically by abstaining from all kinds of intoxications including the use of tobacco (ibid).

The missionary women introduced the concept of combining mission with social work. The women groups in church today are evidence to the continuation of the mission campaign started by the pioneer missionaries. Women groups had started as early as the 1921 as per the Evangelistic Report given by G.G. Crozier. He writes, "The women of our largest Kuki village are supporting an evangelist-teacher in a village in another area closed against the mission" (Crozier, as recorded in Zeliang, 2005, p. 75).³⁹ In 1940, some women preached the gospel in the non-Christian villages in Assam.⁴⁰ All churches today have a separate fellowship for the women known as the women society department. This seems to be the only space in the society where the women group exercise an independent role unchallenged and without being subject to ridicule. They have their own president, secretary, board of members as well as their own aims and objectives. The common objectives in all the churchwomen society studied in the American Baptist Mission field are:

1. To arrange a separate worship service for women in each local church
2. To support and care for the orphans and the widows
3. To reach the un-reached in missionary endeavour
4. To train women to establish true Christian environment in their home and to nurture the physical and spiritual life of children
5. To involve in welfare related activities in the name of the church like collecting rice and woods in the case of death of a church member or tending to poor and sick⁴¹

³⁹ G.G. Crozier, Evangelistic Report for 1921, CBCNEI as compiled by Elungkiebe Zeliang

⁴⁰ Alun K. Haolai, Kuki Baptist Convention's Diary, vol.I (1948-1993)

⁴¹ Interview with women secretaries of three churches--KCC (Kangpokpi), MBC (Motbung) and BCC (Tujang Vaichong)

Another point for consideration is the extent to which the influence of the missionary women changes the structure of gender relations within the household and community. While women were often in subordinate positions in terms of missionary hierarchy, the mission movement contribute significantly to the entrance of women into the public domain. They define and open new spaces for women that give them opportunities to live with other women, exercise their talents and skills, increase mobility for women, increase female literacy through their schools, and improve women's health through their hospitals (Guelke et al, 2007, p. 114).

Nevertheless, there is a hierarchy inside the church in which the women are not allowed in certain area, which were strictly the domain of the men section. Though the women organisation within and outside the church are created alongside the other male-centric positions within the church and the society, it is not entirely oppositional or resistant to their patriarchal character of the system with which they associate themselves. So, the patriarchal norm is reinforced within the church setting and administration of the village. The Missionary women portrayal of the 'ideal Christian women' is not oppositional to the existing system, but opens new sphere for women where the natural attributes of nurturing and self-sacrifice of women are taken out of the domestic household and are utilised into a more public community-level domains. The term, 'patriarchal bargains' given by Deniz Kandiyoti is relevant to describe the situation. Kandiyoti (1991, p. 104) argues, "...patriarchal bargains are not timeless or immutable entities, but are susceptible to historical transformations that open up new areas of struggle and renegotiation of the relations between women and men." It does enable the participation of women in public sphere of community life through church and mission activities.

5.8 Conclusions

The main obstacle to the equal access of land in the society is the customary norms, which is still significant to members of the Thadou-Kuki community.

The stringent laws of customary norms further aggravate the denial of land rights within the family where a certain section is marginalised. These customary laws are authorised with the duty of public administration and the control and management of their land and forests. Today, it is traditional structures that involve hereditary, non-elected headmen or chiefs which appears outdated in the current democratic scenario. Moreover, such structures are patriarchal and feudal as they bar women from holding positions of political power (Sundar, 2005, p. 4430).

Women in the Thadou-Kuki society are twice alienated from the possibility of land right. First, the rights to land of any individual or all villagers in the village are through the chief. Secondly, as per the customary norms, it is the man who is preferred for allocation of land. It is also the man who is usually in leadership and who is attributed the authority to decide who and how much should be allotted to a person. Then, in the household and within the domestic sphere, women are further sidelined in favour of the male members of the family. Even her own sons have a greater right to the family land than she does.

Women do not have access to traditional customary law courts, which is the main key to their empowerment over customary laws. There is therefore a need for reservation for women. The assumption that tribal societies are egalitarian and does not need empowerment is a great hindrance to their development. As the Sadar Hill areas are under the District Council Act of 1971, there should be a special provision for reservation for women at the higher level of office as well. There is a need to question again the relevance of customary norms on gender and property rights for the present situation; what components of the norms should be maintained and what should be forced or be allowed to evolve out.

The focus of the chapter then shifted to women church groups and their contribution to the empowerment of women. The missionary women were influential in creating women's church groups, which enabled women to be

active in the public sphere through church groups. In a society which is committed to the ideology that woman's place is at home, evangelical Christianity is used to broaden women's geographical horizons. This is an important landmark and element in the struggle for gender equality. However, women's church groups are restricted to welfare-related activities. Thus, these women have a non-domestic sphere in which to act and achieve concrete progress, but this is not to be equated with complete emancipation.

In analysing, the influence of the missionary women in changing the structure of gender relations within the household and community, religion represents a paradoxical emancipation. Emancipation exists to a certain extent, as it provides a space for women outside the domestic domain, but this does not mean their overall empowerment. The authority does not really influence upon the village administration in which their access to land is determined. The changes in women discrimination in inheritance laws could only bring forth by the customary law court with the support of the church. However, the various women organisations are a beginning to women empowerment. Motbung especially has only the churchwomen organisation functioning in the village. Women direct ownership and control of land would be crucial in enhancing women's bargaining power within and outside the household in ensuring their overall empowerment.

Chapter 6

Land and Livelihood

6.1 Introduction

Land as a livelihood means land as a productive resource besides signifying 'identity' and 'territoriality'. As a principal means of production in agriculture, it is not reproducible (Banaji, 1976, p. 1). Gunnar Myrdal is of the opinion that the distribution of land, which is tied with leisure, enjoyment of status and authority is constitutes the most important basis for inequality (as cited in Singh, 2009, p. 112). In the pre-British period, the economy of the Thadou-Kukis was characterised by closely related bonds of kinship operative through families, clans and kindred governed production and distribution. Family was the unit of production without any division of labour except the one based on age and sex. Technology was at a very rudimentary level and production was mainly for consumption.

Colonialism brings with it land reforms, immigration and out-migration, superior agricultural technology, commodity production, and increase in markets in all the spaces that it trod upon. For Alavi, colonialism was capable of transforming the meaning of a social relationship without changing its form. Feudal relationships were changed when encapsulated within the capitalist world and they in the process became part of a system of expanded reproduction (as cited in Cleaver, 1976, p. A-8). Similarly, the politico-legal-economic measures of both colonialism and the modern state have altered the micro-level institutions leading to agrarian transition in the hills of Manipur. Today, there is both the co-existence of both pre-capitalist and capitalist social relations of production. Like most countries of the world, the Indian economists in its policy on agriculture have an orientation towards the following goals:--

(1) to overcome the misery, squalor and illiteracy of the peasantry by transforming traditional rural society (2) to influence the peasants to modernize

their agriculture technique and (3) to carry out this transformation and modernization in a manner that facilitate the development of the entire national economy (Thorner, 1987, p. xi). As early as the 1950s, McKim Marriot argued that India's villages were not little republics (Marriot, 1955). The Indian village is changing, and the degree and nature of change varies from region to region.

Robert Redfield classifies those people who make a living and have a way of life through cultivation of the land as peasants. They are those groups of people for whom agriculture is a livelihood and a way of life and not a business for profit (Redfield, 1969, pp. 27-28). On the other hand, the type of agriculturists, who carry on agriculture for reinvestment and business, who looked on the land as capital and commodity, are not peasants but farmers (ibid). A peasant is, "a man who is in effective control of a piece of land to which he has long been attached by ties of tradition and sentiment (ibid)." Alexander Chayanov's definition of pure family farm, which employs no hired wage labour, but is solely dependent on the work of the members of family is relevant to define the society in its pre-colonial state. This concept is however inadequate to define the postcolonial peasantry (as cited in Thorner et. al, 1987, p. xiii).

The chapter will study the decreasing dependence on land as a livelihood system for the people and the nature of penetration of capitalist relations into agriculture. The indicators of the capitalist character of modern agriculture according to Kautsky are—(1) the individual ownership of land and (2) the commodity character of its products (Banaji, 1976, p.11). Inability of the village landholdings structure to provide occupation has forced the youth to look for alternative means of livelihood. Therefore, the paper will position the tribal land tenure system in the context of India; study the agriculture practice, the concept and nature of labour, social differentiation of farming, occupational diversification, etc.

6. 2 Land Tenure Systems

By 'land tenure', the paper is concerned with the complex relationships that exist between categories of individuals and groups in reference to land and their respective products. The study of land tenure includes questions like the manner in which land is used by the community and its members (Malinowski, 1966, p. 318). This showed the customary or legal system of titles, which are "the rights, privileges and responsibilities attached to the soil" (ibid). However, this system grows out of the uses to which the soil is put, out of the economic values, which surrounds it. Therefore, land tenure is an economic fact as well as a legal system (ibid). Land is a factor of production in economic processes, comparable to labour and capital. The Indian society is characterised by different modes of productive organisation that in-turn gives raise to differing rights, duties and obligations, and leading to particular patterns of property rights (Singh, in Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 112-136). No doubt, the economic utilisation of land forms the solid core of all privileges and claims. In understanding the land and livelihood relationship amongst the hill tribes of Manipur, it is crucial to understand its differences with the land system under the caste system that dominates the Indian mainland.

6. 2. 1 Rights in the Soil under the Caste System

The land system or land tenure and settlement pattern in most Indian villages are influenced by the rules of hierarchy and the distribution of rights and privileges as governed by the Caste system. Prior to the British, the village headmen acted as the collector of revenue in the form of kind and passed on the same to the state. The village used to be an independent social and economic unit. There was equilibrium between the village agriculture and the share in agricultural produce. Contrary to the pre-British period, the village economic self-sufficiency was dissolved and economy became increasingly an integral part of the national and even world economy. The British government created private property in land in the form of Ryotwari and Zamindari systems. The Zamindari system made the landlords master of the village community, while the Ryotwari system cut

through the heart of the village communities by making separate arrangement between each peasant cultivator and the state. The new land system thus made mobile both the land and the peasant, and left the way open for growth in power of the moneylender and absentee Landlords (as cited in Mandavdhare, 1993 (ed.), p. 78).

In discussing about village institution, management of village affairs and local governance, Baden-Powell in his book, "The Origin and Growth of Village Communities in India" describes two great classes of villages. In one type of class, a hereditary headman (called *patel* and by other names) is an essential part of the constitution, constituting the core of the village authority system (Baden-Powell, 1908, p. 10). In former days, the villages relied greatly on the protection given by this official. The respect that is influenced by his 'moral influence' and 'material power' helped him in maintaining the balance of power (ibid, p. 11). In the second form of village, the land-owning body is composed of a dominant class, holding the whole jointly or in shares. "Village affairs are, or formerly were, controlled by a council of elders or heads of the co-sharing householders: all being equal in rank—and not official chiefs (ibid, p. 12)." A Panchayat or committee of elders for settling disputes is assembled in every village. This was the universal mode of settling caste, social and land cases, and especially boundary disputes (ibid (footnotes), p. 13).

Regarding rights in soil, Baden-Powell (1908, p. 19) summarises the salient features of difference between two kinds of village in a short table:--

I. Severalty (or Raiyatwari) Village / Hereditary headman

- Influential headmen (often still possessing certain privileges) is part of the natural constitution
- Holdings entirely separate, and not shares of a unit estate
- No joint liability for revenue: each holding separately assessed on its merits

- No jointly owned area of waste or “common” land belongs to the village, or is available for partition

II. Joint Village

- No headman originally, but a Panchayat as in modern times an official headman, appointed to represent the community
- The holdings (sometimes joint) are shares of a unit estate
- Liability (joint and several) always, for the revenue assessed in a lump sum
- The village site, and usually an area of waste, owned in common, and is available for partition

However, the relationship between caste and land is also undergoing changes. Gail Omvedt in her edited work, “Land, Caste and Politics in Indian States,” writes on the relationship between Indian feudalism and the caste system through the ages. By the time of the British conquest, the Indian feudalism was dominant and they controlled the most important means of production, the land (Omvedt, 1982, p. 15). The ruling states like the Mughals and the Hindus periodically laid claim to ownership of the land but were unable to enforce this, whereas the main producing classes of the peasants, artisans and labourers had certain types of ‘rights to the land’ and to ‘the means of production’ (ibid). “They were primarily subordinate tenants dependent on the village feudal for access to the land and the performance of their functions (ibid).” Nevertheless, the nature of these feudal classes and the very structuring of the relations of production they dominated were defined in terms of the caste system (ibid).

Jean Dreze in the essay, “Palampur, 1957-93: Occupational Change, Landownership and Social Inequality” uses information on a village in Western Uttar Pradesh obtained from five intensive surveys conducted at different points of time to detail the socio-economic changes especially in terms of occupational change, landownership and social inequality. He points out that the occupational

structure has undergone change. Earlier, there was a close link between occupation and caste. There was a contrast in occupation according to the difference in caste. This he says is because of wage employment and decline in traditional occupation. Closeness of the village to a well-developed non-agricultural sector seems to have accelerated this process (Lal, et.al, 2001).

6.2.2 Communal System of Management and Control of Land in Manipur

The State of Manipur has two distinct physiographic divisions in which two different land systems and productive organization of economic activities existed. There is the valley region which is located in the middle of the state. This constitutes about ten percent of the state and is the habitat of the majority ethnic group known as 'the Meiteis' who are mostly Hindus by religion (Singh, in Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 113). The valley region has a rich tradition of wet rice cultivation had an agrarian economy that seldom experience food security problems (ibid, p. 114). Land as a means of production and livelihood is much more vital in the hill economy than in the valley region, that is, the hill population in Manipur was more dependent on land as a basis for sustenance (ibid, p. 115). "Land and land systems are therefore sought to be sacrosanct and inalienable, in fact traditional land rights and tenure systems are construed to be the very basis of tribal village polity and identities (ibid)."

In order to substantiate on the agricultural structure of the Hills of Manipur, we will take the case of three areas of Manipur that are dominated by the Thadou-Kuki group of people. The three areas—Motbung,¹ Tujang Vaichong² and

¹ Motbung village is located on the National Highway 39 in Manipur, which is about 26 kilometres from Imphal, the capital. Chieftainship system is still functional and the village council consists of 14 members, who are loosely elected by the community from the village itself. Women are not presented on this traditional council. As per 2001 census, the village has about 478 household, but as per the chief census of 2008, the household population is 609. The village is divided into ten small neighbourhoods. In order to get a proper representation of the population, 20 houses are selected out of each lane.

² Tujang Vaichong is a village with a household population of 156 as per the government census of 2001. The number of household as per the chief's record in 2008 is 194 out of which 78 are non-Kuki. A household survey was done in 65 houses. It still follows many of the traditional customary laws and practices. The chief still has a legitimate rule over the people.

Kangpokpi³ come under the Sadar Hills West Sub-division of Senapati District of Manipur. Since the three villages that constitute my field are under three different types of authority system, the land system also differs. The first two villages are typical traditional Thadou-Kuki villages which are under chieftainship. The members of the village council assist the chief. Kangpokpi is not under chieftainship system but exist under the autonomy of a town committee called the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee. In studying agrarian relation, I prefer the term, 'farmer' instead of the term, 'peasant'. A farmer here refers to a person who operates a farm or an agricultural field either directly or indirectly.

³ Kangpokpi represents altogether a different entity. It is not under chieftainship system but under the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee. It is under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration. The number of house as per the 2008 census is 1662. The town is divided into fifteen wards. A household survey is conducted in 40 houses of each of the 15 wards/ locality.

Table I

Demographic Profile of the Field

Name of the Village	Location of the area of study	Census of 2001 (No. of Household) ⁴	Census of 2001 (No. of Population)		Local Records (No. of Household) 2008	Local Records (No. of Population) 2008	
			Male	Female		Male	Female
<i>Tujang Vaichong</i>	<i>Sadar Hills West Sub-Div of Senapati Dist.</i>	156	810		194 ⁵	1015	
			<i>Male-420</i>			<i>Male-520</i>	
			<i>Female-390</i>			<i>Female-495</i>	
<i>Motbung</i>	<i>Saitu-Gamphazol Sub-Div of Senapati Dist.</i>	478	3169		528 ⁶	3591	
			<i>Male-1597</i>			<i>Male-1772</i>	
			<i>Female-1572</i>			<i>Female-1819</i>	
<i>Kangpokpi</i>	<i>Sadar Hills West Sub-Div of Senapati Dist.</i>	774	4584		1662 ⁷	9092	
			<i>Male-2328</i>			<i>Male-4492</i>	
			<i>Female-2256</i>			<i>Female-4600</i>	

Of the household survey conducted, if the respondents are found to be in possession of agricultural fields or work on others' field, then they are given another questionnaire meant for those who are farmers⁸ or involved in agricultural related activities. A survey of the farmers and those involved in agriculture related activities in Tujang Vaichong village reveals that nearly the

⁴ Census of India, 2001, District Census Handbook, Record Structure: Village Directory

⁵ Chief of Tujang Vaichong Record, 2008

⁶ Motbung Village Hill House Counting, Population Census 2008

⁷ The Ward wise hill house counting for the year 2008 by SDC Kangpokpi, Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration, Kangpokpi

whole population, except a minimalist percentage are involved in agriculture. The survey result will be utilised to understand the mode of production and the nature of agrarian transition taking place at the micro level in the hills.

a) The Mode of Production or Agriculture

In traditional Thadou-Kuki society, Jhumming or shifting cultivation was practiced where the site for cultivation was never permanent. An interesting feature of their cultivation was the ritual of appeasement performed before the selection of the field. This was done as a mark of respect and acknowledgement of the spirits of the jungle as the prior owners of the forest. The Chief of the village and the village priest takes centre-stage in the project. During the month of March, the *Hausa* fixes a date for clearing the jungle in the Jhum fields by setting the jungle on fire. The date is fixed by the *Hausa* in consultation with his executive body known as the *Semang Pachong*. Helthang Kilong⁹ says that each villager chooses a site of his or her preference.

The Daiphu ritual is done in the agricultural fields to invoke blessings in terms of health and wealth. This is because throughout the whole year, life for the people would evolve around the field. They work as labourers tending to the field and spending the major part of the day on it. Therefore, it is crucial for them to perform 'daiphu' to protect themselves from various ailments, diseases or misfortunes and to procure good health and wealth mainly in the form of abundant harvest. Unless and until this ritual is performed, nobody is allowed to start working. The following day is observed as a rest day, which is called *Dainit*. On this day, no one works in the field. Most of the people remain within their homes.

Ploughing and sowing, which begin immediately after the inaugural ceremony will go on during March and April. When all traces of life persisting in the fields have been removed, the land is ready for ploughing, that is, after the unnecessary

⁹ One of my respondents of the aged group from Motbung Village in Sadar Hills district of Manipur.

weeds or plants are removed from the field (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 104). On first day, the wife of the Chief inaugurates the sowing of seeds by sowing various types of seeds in a small plot of land belonging to the Chief. Others, however, do not sow their seeds on this day. Besides paddy, various kinds of vegetables are sown on the jhum fields. The inauguration of sowing by the *Hausa's* (Chief) wife is called *Muchilhahni*.¹⁰ The next day, all the other villagers start working in their respective fields. If a natural water-spring happens to exist in a particular plot of land, the owner of that plot of land is required to perform the *twikhuh thoina*¹¹ ritual in addition to the *daiphu* on the same day. It is a ritual of requesting the spirits of waters to remain under ground and not come out on the surface.

The period after ploughing and sowing is followed by a short period of slackening. "In this time of waiting, when the fate of the seedlings depends on a female, ambiguous nature, and man cannot intervene without danger, the virtual cessation of activity reflects his limited control over the processes of germination and gestation; it falls to woman to play the part of a midwife and to offer nature a sort of ritual and technical assistance (hoeing, for example) in its labour (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 131)."

The traditional Kuki society was dominantly an agricultural society. Gautam Bhadra writes, "One of the chief characteristics of the new Kukis, more especially of the Thadoes (Thadous) was the essential habit of migration due to their mode of cultivation and due to organisation of chieftainship" (Bhadra, 1975, p. 25). Their migratory habit in the past was connected with the mode of production, which was Jhum cultivation. It was an ingenious method to raise the superior quality of produce. When the land is considered exhausted, jungle is allowed to recover it, the bamboo again springs up in its old locality, and in the course of between seven and ten years, the soil is once more fit to be brought under cultivation (Stewart, 1855, p. 604). Stewart writes about the superior quality of the rice

¹⁰ Sowing of seeds

¹¹ As describe in Chapter 2

produced by the Kukis as compared to the Kacharis and the Nagas. He attributed this to their technique of abandoning the site of cultivation after the first and second crops (ibid). Therefore, permanent cultivation must have started only around after the 19th century.

In theory, the entire land of the village belongs to the Chief, yet it is the village community members that share the land among themselves and do the actual cultivation. The general condition, which has prevailed among the Kukis from the earliest times, is that the land within the Chiefdom is distributed to the villagers for cultivation. A member of the village authority with the approval of the Chief superintend and transact all business matters in connection with the land cultivation, measurement, collection of tax, etc. There are also some restrictions regarding forest laws. The practice of seizure and sale of land for private debt was new to the native imagination (Chatterjee et al, 1989, p. 1171). It was unanimously agreed that ownership rights depended upon two factors: -- (1)" who first cleared the land and made it productive and (2) who conquered the area first (ibid)".

The chief opens some areas every year to the villagers for '*jhumming*' or '*thinglhang lei*' and for cutting woods in the mountains. The villagers have to seek the chief's permission to lease out the land to them. They have to bring with them a rooster as a token or this is also done through the traditional '*cha-omna*' (where tea is served to the chief before a request is put forward). The land is reverted back to the chief in the case when the occupant migrates to another village. The permission of the chief is essential for procuring land for cultivation, taking woods from the forests, cultivating in the mountain region. In Tujang Vaichong village, the permission granted is valid for a year and have to be renewed every year. For cutting of woods, the chief opens the forest for the public for about 2-3 months (mainly in the month of December, January and February). During that period, the villagers have to collect enough woods to last for their consumption throughout the year. In exceptional cases, a new settler can get access to the woods to build his house. However, the restriction is against using these woods for commercial purposes.

Plot sizes are not at the discretion of the villagers as the chief whose duty as the overseer has to see it to that everyone gets it equally. However, the chief and his ministers take into consideration the number of family members and their ability to obtain additional labour. "Newcomers to a village are at a disadvantage because the most desirable fields have already been taken. The relatives of the individual who had done the original clearing (forest) also inherit fields (Little, 1991, p. 378)." In the case of Tujang Vaichong, the permission to make small vegetable garden in the vacant mountainside requires the permission of the village chief. Special provisions is made for those refugees who had come to reside in the village due to the 1993 Kuki-Naga clashes because they are not in possession of paddy field for wet rice cultivation. The granted permission is valid for a year and has to be renewed every year. Due to continuing growth and pressure from the population, the chief does not always grant the site for cultivation to the same family every year. The gap may range from one year to five years. The name of the new locality is called "*Lhanghoi Veng*". This type of locality is prevalent in other Kuki villages also. In Motbung village, the locality marked out by the chief for displaced victims of ethnic conflict is called "*Lhungjang Veng*". This is an example of how in a village, members come together as a community to act as a redressal mechanism to social disorder.

In relation to land, there are three types of people to be found in villages. They are:--

1. Landlord/ Chief¹²
2. Landless labourers
3. Those who cultivate their own land
4. Those who lease out their land
5. Absentee landowners¹³

¹² Overseer of the whole land of the village

¹³ A question asked on the respondent relationship to the land on which he resides, owns or cultivates.

The two villages of Motbung and Tujang Vaichong do not have a commercial form of agriculture. Moreover, in a village, which is under the chieftainship system, villagers are allotted land according to the number of mouth to feed in the family. This lessens the scope for any enterprises of this sort to happen. The Motbung village has stricter rules against outsiders. In Tujang Vaichong, the Nepali migrants are actively involved in agricultural production of the village. In return for their labour, they usually procure about half of the rice production of the village annually.

Kangpokpi is interesting because it represents a different case altogether. Because of the presence of better amenities and infrastructures like schools, colleges, bigger market and offices, the town is over populated. There are many who have migrated from nearby villages. So, this compresses the land in such a way that there is little or no space for agricultural field. Most of my respondents in Kangpokpi who possess agricultural field/ land own it in neighbouring villages, in their native villages or in a mountain named *T.Khullien Moul*. According to the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee Chairman Haokholien Guite, "Jhumming is mostly done on *T.Khullien Moul*," a mountain owned by neighbouring Naga village. They lease out the land to the people of Kangpokpi who have to pay taxes according to the size of the land allotted to them. The prices ranging from Rupees 200 to above based on the area size of the land. The tax paid is called '*gam-pan*' or '*lam-pan*', which means land tax.¹⁴ Wet-Rice cultivation/phailei is very scarce. They are mostly done in neighbouring villages like Lungpho gam, Kaithelmanbi or the villages in Imphal-Tamenglong road¹⁵ like Tujang Vaichong, Gelnel, Bungmoul etc.¹⁶

¹⁴ Guite, Haokholien, Chairman of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Interviewed on 26th November, 2008

¹⁵ Imphal-Tamenglong Road is popularly known as 'IT road' by the local inhabitants of Kangpokpi and Tujang Vaichong village. IT road is a road in Kangpokpi town in Senapati district that leads to Tamenglong district. Tujang Vaichong is a village in the border of the two districts.

The types of farming practice in Motbung are jhumming and wet-rice cultivation, the local term being '*thinglhang lei*' and '*phailei*' respectively. A third type called '*joulei*' exists in which they plant maize, arum, capsicum, cucumber, pumpkin etc. Rice is the staple food. Harvesting is earlier in the case of jhumming as compared to wet-rice cultivation. The land revenue paid to the chief is called '*Changseu*' or an annual payment of a basket full of rice at the time of harvesting. They also have to pay rupees 15 annually to the government. Livestock in the homestead land, jhumming in the forest and wet-rice cultivation is done in the plain areas. The agricultural cycle or cropping pattern is different for wet-rice cultivation or *phailei* and jhumming or *thinglhang lei*. In the case of *phailei*, planting is done in June and harvesting between October to November. Jhumming is started in March and harvesting is done around the month of July. In this village, jhumming is done mainly for vegetable garden.¹⁷

The open reserve area that is open by the chief is open mainly for any villager who wants to use it for vegetable cultivation. However, prior permission of the village chief is required. Scientific technology is not so popular, but tractors, fertilizers, herbicides, weed killers and pesticides are used in cautious quantity. Agricultural tools like axe and hoe are still popular. In the family land transmission, the eldest son is the potential or likely inheritor. The co-relation between changes from joint or extended families to nuclear and single unit families today to the changes in the structure of land and land rights is that there are smaller land holding but the eldest son usually inherit the biggest land.¹⁸

In the case of Tujang Vaichong, the permission to make small vegetable garden in the vacant mountainside requires the permission of the village chief. Special provisions is made for those refugees who had come to reside in the village due to

¹⁷ Questions are asked on—types of farming, agricultural calendar, and land revenue paid to the chief and the Government and the types of vegetables grown.

¹⁸ Questions are asked on technology and agricultural implements used for farming, potential heir in family land transmission and co-relation between types of family and the structure of land.

the 1993 Kuki-Naga clashes as they do not possess paddy field for wet-rice cultivation. The permission granted is valid for a year and has to be renewed every year. Due to continuing growth and pressure from the population, the chief does not always grant the site for cultivation to the same family every year. The gap may range from one year to five years. Rice is the most distinctive crop grown by the Kukis and is cultivated intensively but largely on subsistence level. The types of vegetables grown are arum, beans, potatoes, ginger, maize, cucumber, etc.¹⁹

In the case of Tujang Vaichong, we have a new definition of the term 'landless labourers'. The landless villagers in this context are refugees from the 1993 ethnic clashes, who had seek refuge in the village. Unlike other areas, they still have land for cultivation in the mountainside, which is allotted by the chief. They fend for an alternate means of livelihood if they find the produce inadequate for subsistence. The real question or challenge lies in acquiring the essentials of living in a competitive global society like education, transport, communication system and infrastructure for society's development.²⁰

There are two types of paddy cultivation. One is performed in the plains and is called '*phailei*' or 'wet-rice cultivation.' The second type is called '*thinghang lei*' or jhumming. A third type also exist which is called '*joulei*' and is meant for vegetable gardens. The chief with the assistance of village authority members would lease out one mountain for the use of the villagers. Fair allocation of land to all villagers who had sought permission for it is the duty of the village authority members. The villagers give the chief one basketful of the produce as a token of appreciation and not necessarily as a tribute. This is also like an appeasement policy or a means of securing land again for the next year.

¹⁹ Questionnaire on the farmers in Tujang Vaichong

²⁰ *ibid*

Under the chieftainship system, since the chief supposedly owns all lands, who owns it on behalf of the villagers, those who work on the allotted land are considered the landowner. Landowner refers to those who have the rights over the produce of their land. Some work on their own land as well as those of others as farm hands and agricultural labourers or take over other's land on contract basis. The villagers pay an annual tax of rupees fifteen. However, the customary practice of paying tributes to the chief called '*changseu*' or a basketful of rice has been stopped.

Most houses in Tujang Vaichong have piggery or poultry besides kitchen garden. The chief's family has horticulture farms. Regarding the agricultural calendar or cropping pattern, slash and burn of Jhumming sites is done in January, sowing is done between March to April, weeding is done between May to June and harvesting is done in October. Under *phailei* or wet-rice cultivation, tilling the land is done in May, sowing of seeds in June, weeding in July and August and harvesting in November.²¹

b) Agrarian Structure and their Transformation

In the past, agricultural production was dominated by customs and traditions. Changes taking place today is due to the interplay of various factors such as response to technological change result of cultural contact, policy decisions in respect of forest and agricultural lands and new ideology. The expression 'commercialization of agriculture' is used to describe two related processes: "first, a shift in the agrarian economy from production for consumption to production for the market; and second, a process where land starts acquiring the features of a commodity and begins to be sold and purchased in the market, like other commodities" (Jodhka, in Veena Das (ed.), 2003, p. 1220).

²¹ Based on the questionnaires given to respondents in Tujang Vaichong who are farmers or involved in agriculture related activities

As the Ryotwari System of land, tenure was introduced in Manipur, private property in land and taxation in money started the process of monetization and marketization of the economy and commercialisation of agriculture (Singh, (in Singh ed.), 2009, p. 119). Area under rice increased from 26,500 hectares in 1891 to 75,370 hectares in 1941 due to the impact of private property on the land system (ibid, pp. 119-120). The Colonial Rule ushers in the practice of the collection of house tax causing the intrusion into village polity of modern state institutional norms the concepts like private property and accumulative consciousness. These factors change the very moral foundations of the tribal land systems (ibid, p. 116).

R. Brown writes in 1873 in the book, "Statistical Account of the Native State of Manipur, and Hill Territory under its Rule" that trading and bartering had already begun between the hill people and the valley people. He records, "A good deal of the cotton raised, which seems of excellent quality, finds its way into the bazaars of Manipur, there being no cotton grown in the valley. The hill men lying nearest to Kachar also convey cotton to the bazaars of Lakhipur, &c., oil seeds, pepper, vegetables of various kinds, potatoes, small, and of inferior quality, ginger, Indian corn, tobacco, pan leaves, &c. There are numbers of jungle roots and plants used also as food by the hill-men. The yam is plentiful" (Brown, 2001, p.18). He writes that the hill-men are not dependent on trade and manufactures for the sustenance of the people, and this custom is confined in Manipur almost entirely to the bartering of raw cotton and a few other articles in the bazaars. Salt is chiefly taken in return, that is, it is used in as a mode of transaction before the hill men were introduced to the currency system. The hill men were the main supplier of firewood required for the inhabitants of the valley (Brown, 2001, p. 19). Therefore, the economy of the valley areas has been dependent on the hill areas even during and prior to the colonial days.

Table II
Details of Household Survey Conducted

<i>Name of Village</i>	<i>Household Population</i>	<i>No. of respondent for Household survey</i>
Tujang Vaichong	194	65
Motbung	609	200
Kangpokpi	1662	560

Tujang Vaichong Village

Tujang Vaichong under Imphal-Tamenglong Road is under Kangpokpi Police Station. It is around 40 kilometres away from Kangpokpi, and Kangpokpi is around 50 kilometres north of Imphal. The National Highway 39 runs through Kangpokpi. It is in the borderline between Senapati and Tamenglong districts. There are many villages between Kangpokpi and Tujang Vaichong village. The roads are extremely bad and transportation is very unreliable and uncomfortable. There is no electricity supply in the village and people use solar lamps to light up their houses at night. There is one movie/video hall in the whole village. It runs with the help of a generator, which is recharged in the nearest town.

There is only one church, the Kuki Baptist Convention in the whole village. With the exception of a few households, the whole village is more or less involved in agricultural production in one way or the other. There are about 78 non-Kuki houses in the village as per the 2008 census. The significance of this village is that they still use traditional method of farming. They do not use fertilizers or tractors and till the land with cows, oxens, axe, hoe and spade. Those who do not lease out their land also rent the cows and oxens of the Nepalis for tilling their land. Of the 65 houses that are surveyed, only five houses have nothing to do with agriculture. The entire respondents have lived in the village for more than 10 years.

Next, the occupational diversification in the village is studied. The aim would be to find out whether the occupational profile of the household survey exhibits livelihood diversifications and movement away from agriculture. The total

illiteracy rate as per the 2001 census is 618 out of 810 population. There is only one school in the entire village by the name L.K. Junior High School.

There are two types of proprietors in the village; those who procure permanent ownership rights to their land through the chiefs and those who are temporarily allotted a site for Jhum lands or kitchen gardens in the mountainside. The former are given paper deeds, which is not the same as patta but comes with the same validity. The latter is valid only for an obscure period depending on the whims of the village chief and the council of ministers. In the allotment of jhum land, the landless labourers are given priority over the others. From our field findings, the chief allots most of the land in the village. Out of the 20 landlords (land owners) involved in wet-land cultivation, 14 lease out their land to the Nepalis. Even those who cultivate their own land rents cows and oxens from them for tilling the land.

Table III
Occupational Structure

<i>Employment</i>	
<i>1. Government Jobs</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>2. Private Jobs (including NGOS, private teachers, carpenters and Business)</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>3. Primarily agricultural labourers or cultivators</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>4. Landowners (permanent owners)</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>5. Landowners (Temporary owners/Jhum land allotted by chief for specific years)</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>6. Both primary and tertiary sector jobs</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>7. Others (Landless Labourers)</i>	<i>8</i>

Out of the 65 household that are surveyed, the details of the family members show that there are 27 graduates, 3 Masters, 22 higher secondary passed and 24 who got through their matriculation. There is a large-scale migration to

neighbouring village or out of state in search of better education and jobs; in short to better one's livelihood prospect. Use of technology or pesticides is nil in the village. The business in the village is limited to basic essentials like groceries, pharmacy and stationary shop. As far as commercialization is concerned, the villagers carry surplus rice and vegetables to Kangpokpi Urban town where intermediaries who sell it to the vendor in the town purchase them. Due to the absence of adequate marketing facilities, the villagers do not get adequate price for the commodities they sell. Most of the houses claim that they were granted their land by the chief, except for five houses who claim to have bought their lands and had paper deeds. Some homestead lands were also carved out of the process of inheritance and participation of the land gifted by the chief. None of the house visited were in a rented house. Commodification of land has started but the percentage is negligible.

Motbung Village

Motbung village is located on the National Highway 39 in Manipur, which is about 26 kilometres from Imphal, the capital. The name Motbung is derived from the abbreviation, "*Mol ong tuo bu um na gam*" which means a land that lies between two hills and is prosperous in food grains. Chieftainship system is still functional to this day. A body of elected village authority members consisting of 13 members assist the Chief.²² Motbung is a relatively developed village with all the amenities of modernity due to the close proximity with the National Highway 39. There are many churches in the village, but the main church with the largest number is the Motbung Baptist Church.

The village has ten lanes. Technology used for farming and agricultural implements like axe and hoe, tractors have been used since 2001. Fertilizers, herbicides and weed killers and pesticides are used. Even households that cannot afford tractors rent it during the tilling session. Though the dependency

²² Kaikhosei, S.L., Chief of Motbung Village, Interviewed on 13th October 2008

on agriculture is lesser than the first village, agriculture is highly popular in this village in a more developed form. Of the 200 houses that are surveyed, only about half are fully involved in agriculture. About 90 percent of the respondents have lived in the village for more than 10 years. The details of family members within the household show the following occupational diversification.

Table IV
Occupational Structure:

<i>Employment</i>	
<i>1. Government Jobs</i>	<i>71 (4 retd.)</i>
<i>2. Private Jobs (including NGOS, private teachers, carpenters and Business)</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>3. Primarily agricultural labourers or cultivators</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>4. Landowners (permanent owners)</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>5. Landowners (Temporary owners/Jhum land allotted by chief for specific years)</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>6. Both primary and tertiary sector jobs</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>7. Others (Landless Labourers)</i>	<i>16</i>

The total literacy rate in Motbung as per the 2001 census is 2043 out of 3169; with 1122 male and 921 female.²³ As per the household survey in which 200 households were covered out of 609, there are 8 post graduates, 68 graduates, 70 twelfth passed, 117 tenth passed respectively. Though not every household are involved in agriculture, only 20 of the occupants of the houses surveyed are tenants in rented houses.

Regarding commercialisation of agriculture, there is a 'Monday market' in the village in which there is trade exchange with neighbouring villages. There are

²³ Census of India, 2001, District Census Handbook, Record Structure: Village Directory

shops of different kinds along the National highway 39 that nearly cuts the village in the middle. Moreover, the village is close to the state capital Imphal. This enables easy transportation and trade to a bigger market. Regarding the types of transfer of landholdings in the village, as against the customary ideals in which all lands belong to the chief who in turn give it to his subject, the chief of Motbung owns only 9 pari.²⁴ However, this does not mean that the villagers are no longer subject to his legal rights of authority as the Chief of the village.

Table V
Types of Transfer of Land Holdings
(The mode in which the person has come to own the land)

<i>Types</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Land Sales and Purchase</i>	<i>112</i>
<i>The Process of inheritance and partition</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Allotted by the Chief or Gift-deed</i>	<i>74</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>200</i>

Kangpokpi Urban Town

Kangpokpi is around 50 kilometres North of Imphal. The National Highway 39 also runs through this town. It is not under chieftainship system but under the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee.²⁵ The name Kangpokpi is modification of its earlier name 'Kanggui'. The authority system that exists earlier was called 'Bazar Board'. It is under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration. The District Council conducts its general election. The town is divided into fifteen wards. The appropriate term is hill-urban, which is purely under district council.

²⁴ A pari is equivalent to a hectare.

²⁵ The meeting of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee is done at least once every month. Besides the compulsory meeting, there is the emergency meeting that is conducted according to the requirement of the circumstances. The biggest assembly is held at the end of the year. The members do not have a salary. However, an honorary pay of rupees 1,000 is paid to the Chairperson, Vice-chairperson and Secretary. The others are paid rupees 500. Moreover, a sitting allowance of Rs. 100 is paid to all authority members on every meeting.

The apex governing body is the district council. In administration matters, the local customary laws are applied side by side with general administration system of the Indian government.²⁶

Due to the presence of better amenities and infrastructures like schools, colleges, bigger market and offices, Kangpokpi as a town is slightly over populated. There are many who have migrated from nearby villages. This compresses the land and reduces the spaces for agricultural fields within the town.

Table VI
Occupational Structure:

<i>Employment</i>	
<i>8. Government Jobs</i>	<i>261</i>
<i>9. Private Jobs (including NGOS, private teachers, carpenters and Business)</i>	<i>340</i>
<i>10. Primarily agricultural labourers or cultivators</i>	<i>142</i>
<i>11. Landowners (permanent owners)</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>12. Landowners (Temporary owners/Jhum land in the neighbouring T.Khullien Mountain)</i>	<i>131</i>
<i>13. Both primary and tertiary sector jobs</i>	<i>139</i>
<i>14. Others (Landless Labourers)</i>	<i>9</i>

According to the 2001 census, the literacy rate was 3,196 out of 4,584 with the male-female ratio at 1,750: 1,446. Since there are many migrants or seasonal settlers from the neighbouring villages, Kangpokpi has many of its occupants living in rented houses. Better educational facilities in the town result in higher rate of education. There is, therefore, a shift towards the tertiary sector in terms of

²⁶ Guite, Haokholien, Chairman of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Interviewed on 26th November, 2008

occupational choice. As per the household survey conducted in 560 households, there are 1 Phd, 4 Mphil, 21 M.A./Msc, 1 MBBS, 271 graduates, 208 twelfth passed and 197 matriculates. Besides the landowners in wet-rice cultivation and jhum land, 287 of the respondents reside in their own houses procured by purchase, 75 of them live in rented house, 27 in government quarters and the rest in relatives houses. Of the fifteen neighbourhoods in the villages, 38 houses each from a neighbourhood are surveyed as sample of the whole population.

Gupta pictures the rural villages in India as one in which the villagers are desperately seeking a way out of the contemporary agrarian situation (Gupta, 2005, p. 751). "The village landholding structure is such that there are few jobs available in the fields that can engage the rural population on a sustained, albeit, suboptimal, basis (ibid)." Besides fostering greater fluidity in occupational choices, agricultural stagnation has ensured the constant march, in increasing numbers, of employable people in the villages towards urban areas (ibid). The close proximity to national highway 39 is an important indicator to development and an important cause of differentiation of the three villages. Nearness to the highway means better roads connecting villages to town, more motorised vehicles, and better infrastructures like communication systems, electrification, and educational institutions, health and market sector. Better means of transport means greater dependence on the market (Banaji, 1976, p. 9). According to Oomen, the advent of transport and communication and the spread of science and technology have ushered in urban characteristics into rural areas (Oomen, 1984, p. 19), and thus lead to social change. He continues to argue that it is change in the centre and not the periphery that will alter the essential structure of the society (ibid).

6.3 Social Organisation of Labour

Labour, in a broad sociological sense, refers to human efforts in the production of some form of goods or services for the satisfaction of needs of people in society (Sheth, in Veena Das ed., 2003, p. 1243). Labour in its useful form is a condition of

human existence as it serves a specific material purpose which is to sustain life. Labour in its useful form is, therefore, independent of society and is thus a simple condition of human life (Morrison, 1995, p. 66). According to Karl Marx, the products produced by labour in tribal society did not assume the form of commodities because their labour was produced by cooperation rather than isolated acts of labour (ibid). It is only in capitalist societies that the products of labour assumes the form of commodities and thus becomes the subject to be exchange (ibid, pp. 66-67).

The economic system and the social system in a tribal area are interdependent. The former is really an extension of the latter (Devi, 2006, p. 91). "The community heavily depends on the forces of nature, which it propitiates by a variety of rites performed individually or in groups or by the community as a whole. Labour has only two functions namely, production for own consumption or for helping someone else in need. The property rights may not be recognized beyond the right to cultivate land and right to collect the fruit (ibid)." "Godelier identified land use in the hills as patterned after 'kinship relations' within the community in terms of its exchange and actual utility (as cited in Biswas, Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 50)." In this case, land becomes not just a material resource, but also constitutes a symbolic domain that regulates social exchange, livelihood and political power (ibid).

Lieut. R. Stewart writes in 1855 about the labour obligation of the villagers to the chief in a typical Thadou-Kuki village. The entire population was obliged to devote four days in each year, for cultivating his private fields. On the first day, they would cut down the jungle. On the second day, the dry cut down leaves acts as the fuel and is put on fire. The ground is then prepared and on the third they sow and harrow. On the fourth day, they cut and bring in the harvest (Stewart, 1855, p. 626). "Besides the labour of these four days, in which the entire effective population, men, women and children work for him, small parties are made to

assist the chief's domestic slaves; in tending the crop, repairing his house (which edifice is always built afresh by the subjects when a new site is repaired to) and in supplying wood and water for the family (ibid)." In the days of general labour, a great feast is given by the village chief to all his people. This also happens when a big animal like an elephant is killed in order to encourage successful hunters. This is the only form of remuneration ever received by the villagers. As citizens, they are required to supply labour, whenever the chief calls upon them. It says a great deal for the loyalty of the Kookies (Kukis) that they still submit to these exactions without grumbling, paying at the same time the full amount of their house-tax to the British government (ibid, p. 626).

A similar case is Malinowski's writing on the Melanesians' of New Guinea:

When a chief or headmen summons the members of a village community, and they agree to do their gardens communally, it is called Tamgogula. When this is decided upon, and the time grows near for cutting the shrub for new gardens, a festive eating is held on the central place, and there all men go, and takayva (cut down) the scrub on the chief's plot. After that, they cut in turn the garden plots of everyone, all men working on the one plot during a day, and getting on that day food from the owner. This procedure is reproduced at each successive stage of gardening; at the fencing, planting of yams, bringing in supports, and finally, at the weeding, which is done by women. At certain stages, the gardening is often done by each one working for himself, namely at the clearing of the gardens after they are burnt, at the cleaning of the roots of yams when they begin to produce tubers, and at harvesting (Malinowski, 1972, pp. 160-161).

It is a rule that the chief's plots, especially those of an influential chief of high rank, are always gardened by communal labour, and the garden magic is performed first, and with the greatest display (ibid).

6. 3. 1 Social Organisation of Farming

Durkheim makes a distinction between economic and sociological division of labour (Durkheim, 1984). In the economic sense, the division of labour refers to the process of dividing of labour into separate and special operations with the purpose of increasing the rate of production. Whereas, in the sociological sense, the division of labour refers to the principle of social cohesion, which develops in societies whose social links result from the way individuals relate when their occupational functions are separate and specialized (Morrison, 1995, p. 144).

In the Thadou-Kuki society, labour is divided by gender. Certain crops are the domain of women, others of men. Women predominate in seed selection and planting, weeding and other operations, while men do operations such as cutting of the jungle, clearing, burning of the cut undergrowth, etc. Both men and women participate in harvesting. "Gardens are owned and worked individually and may be made whenever suitable land is available (Turner, 1996, p. 22)." In the total agricultural system, from the clearing of gardens to the cooking of food, women play a more tedious role than men do. Men work in short spectacular bouts or energy; the regular patient labour of the women is hoeing up mounds, weeding, digging up roots, soaking, carrying, drying, pounding and sifting, and finally in cooking the rice as well as making rice beer for the labourers. The following three tables show the agricultural calendar common amongst the Thadou-Kukis of Manipur. The table is based on the analyses of fieldwork findings on the farmers.

Male activity, as we can see in the table, starts in a co-operative form: selection of land, slash and burn. The agricultural process is then maintained throughout the year by women; each working alone in her garden or fitfully assisted by her husband. Turner writes, "In agriculture, as in other aspects of Ndembu life, femininity may be equated with continuity, masculinity with discontinuity" (ibid, p. 25). This is applicable to the Thadou-Kuki society. An agricultural "calendar substitutes a linear, homogeneous, continuous time for practical time, which is

made up of incommensurable islands of duration, each with its own rhythm, the time that flies by or drags, depending on what one is doing, i.e. on the functions conferred on it by the activity in progress. By distributing guide-marks (ceremonies and tasks) along a continuous line, one turns them into dividing marks united in a relation of simple succession, thereby creating ex nihilo the question of the intervals and correspondences between points which are no longer topologically but metrically equivalent" (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 105).

Table: VII

Agricultural Calendar (Jhumming/Thinghang Lei) and Cropping Pattern

Month (English)	Corresponding Month in Thadou/Kuki	Type of activities performed/ operation	Work performed		Rituals performed
			Male	Female	
January	Tolbol	Selection of land	Mostly men		
February	Bulte	Clearance of the selected area and spreading out the cut down materials for drying (Chap-phou)	Mostly men		Tolthen
March	Lhakao	Burning the dried forest growth into ashes	Mostly men		Vam nit
April	Lhatun	Ritual	Priest		Daiphu Ritual
		Sowing of seeds	Mostly women	
May	Lhaphul	Waiting for the seeds to sprout		

June	Lhadou	Re-planting		Mostly women	Lom groupings based on gender, age and kinds of work
July	Lhamul	Weeding		Mostly Women	”
August	Lhajing	”		” ”	”
September	Lhalam	”		” ”	”
October	Ellha	Harvesting started and threshing is done	Harvesting done by both men and women	” ”	”
November	Phallha	Harvesting end and celebrations started	Both men and women	” ”	Kut festival
		Village Celebrations	” ”	Threshing and winnowing, making rice beer in olden days	-----
December	Ollha	Preservation of seeds for the next year		Women	

Table: VIII

Agricultural Calendar (Wet Rice Cultivation/ Phailei) and Cropping Pattern

Month (English)	Corresponding Month in Thadou/Kuki	Types of operation	Work performed		Types of crops grown
			Male	Female	
January	Tolbol		Rest	Rest	
February	Bulte	Clearing the fields	Men	Today women also assist them	Rice
March	Lhakao	Tilling the land	Mostly men with the help of oxen or tractors (today)		
April	Lhatun	Sowing the seed		Women folk	
May	Lhaphul	Period of waiting for the seed to sprout			Formation of lom groupings in villages based on gender, age and forms of activities/ in towns there is the recruitment of labourers through the 'theka' and 'nikhotha' system. This is applicable both at the time of weeding and harvesting
June	Lhadou	Replanting the paddy plant in the field	Both men and women	Mostly women	whenever there is a need for a bigger labour power.
July	Lhamul	Weeding	-----	Mostly women	
August	Lhajing	” ”	-----	” ”	

September	Ellha	” ”		” ”	
October	Phallha	Harvesting and threshing	Both men and women get involved in harvesting	Threshing is only done by women	
November	Ollha	Celebrations	Every members of the family		
December		Rest/ Preservation of seeds for the next year		Women	

Table: IX

Agricultural Calendar (Joulei /Community Land) and Cropping Pattern

Month (English)	Corresponding Month in Thadou/Kuki	Types of crops Grown	Work performed		Rituals performed
			Male	Female	
January	Tolbol	Allocation of land by the chief			
February	Bulte	Clearance of the selected area and spreading out the cut down materials for drying (Chap-phou)			
March	Lhakao	Burning the dried forest growth into ashes			
		Ritual	Priest / Pastor		Daiphu / Prayer
April	Lhatun	Sowing of seeds	Mostly by women		
May	Lhaphul	Waiting for the seeds to sprout	-----		
June	Lhadou	Re-planting	Mostly by women		
July	Lhamul	Weeding	Mostly by women		Usually do not need lom groupings, as they are small kitchen gardens. Whereas, the villagers who are allotted bigger lands requires lom groups as helpers

August	Lhajing	” ”	” ”	” ”
September	Lhalam	” ”	” ”	
October	Ellha			
November	Phallha	Harvesting started and threshing is done (in case of agricultural field), vegetables are collected. (only women)	Both men and women	
December	Ollha	Preservation of seeds for the next year	Women	

6. 3. 2 Traditional Lom Systems

Agricultural related activities like cutting and clearing of bush, and later the initial hoeing up of the cleared ground into mounds, may involve a collective work-party of kin and neighbours (Turner, 1996, p. 22). *Lom* is the organisational set-up for the purpose of agricultural activity. It is a form of social arrangement of labour. The functions of the *lom* are concerned mainly with the economic life of the village. When cultivation in the hills is about to start, the people in the village under the leadership of the village headmen will arrange themselves in groupings of many types usually based on the age group they belong to. In village life in the past, the only and central activity or occupation was agriculture, and the whole village evolved around it. Accordingly, each section of the society, whether it is the women, the youth, married folks, the children and the older populace, each section has a different set of alliance mainly based

on the commonality of agricultural related work that concerns them.²⁷ The able-bodied men and women of the village are obliged to join this organisation irrespective of age and sex. Any household of the village can acquire the services of the *Lom*, that is, the collective group labour plays an important part in the village economy and contributed to agricultural productivity (Gangte, 1993, p. 132). The goal is to make the *lom* members reciprocate in helping each other to keep the village self-sufficient in the matter of physical labour (ibid). Any villager in the village has as much right to hire the *lom* as the Chief of the village.

Sowing of the seeds is finished in the month of April or '*lhatun*'. The women folks working in the mountains will plant maize and cucumber at the centre of the field and pumpkin plant and beans at the corner. The Hausa or the chief who is a good judge of men summons a highly capable and faithful young person and entrusts him with the task of organising the '*lom*', that is, the youth corps of the village, which is the main and biggest form of '*lom*' (ibid).

After April is over, everyone has finished sowing seeds, weather and a season change, the field is ready with the first sign of all vegetables' fruits. The rice plant also starts sprouting and it is time for the villagers to engage themselves in weeding the unwanted plants that grow in between the rice plants. It is at this point that the villagers would arrange themselves in sets or groups. This weeding is done for four months, starting from June until the month of September. The final phase of cultivation done during this phase is called '*lousem*'. After *lousem*, the paddy field is ready to be harvested. The purpose of these groupings has been set up to assist in the agricultural life in the hills. Their main activity consist of—

- i. *Louvat* (burning dried forest woods into ashes)
- ii. *Changtu* (sowing of seeds)

²⁷ Kilong, Helthang, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, interviewed on 14th October, 2008

iii. *Loulho* (weeding)

iv. *Chang-at* (harvesting)²⁸

A *lom hausa*²⁹ is appointed to keep a check on the productivity and efficiency of the *Lom* members. The *lom hausa* is endowed the full power to adjudge and to impose punishment on the guilty members of the *lom* involved in criminal and sexual offences. They are bestowed the power to drive out a person from the *lom* (Goswami, 1985, p. 96).

The *Lom* system is a good example of how culture through a system of reciprocal labour and co-operative labour determines the method of cultivation. There are different types of cooperative labour which are formed according to the type of work demanded and who are going to do the work. Victor Turner describes a similar practice amongst the Ndembu society in Africa:

When a man wishes to fell trees and clear bush for a finger-millet garden, he lets it be known that he brewed beer or killed game for those participating in a Chenda (work-party) to be held in a few days (Turner, 1996, p. 22).

However, in the Ndembu society, it is restricted to older men and boys (ibid). Amongst the Thadou-Kukis also, the field owner is obligated to provide rice beer and food to all the *lom* members who come to work. Nowadays, this has been replaced by tea and snacks.³⁰

In analysing the character of the *Lom* system among the Thadou-Kukis, it can be construed to be both organised and communal in form. For Malinowski, these two conceptions are not synonymous, and it is well to keep them apart. Organised labour implies the co-operation of several socially and economically

²⁸ Singson, Tongkholam, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, Interviewed on 13th October, 2008

²⁹ *Lom Hausa* here refers to the *Lom* leader. The word *Hausa* originally denotes a Chief. However, the term has come to be used to mean leader as well.

³⁰ Mrs. Neikim, Motbung Village, discussion on the changing nature of labour system, 16th October, 2008

different elements, whereas communal labour is when a number of people are engaged side by side, performing the same work, and is free of any technical division of labour, or social differentiation of function (Malinowski, 1972, p. 159). Malinowski wrote about five different form of communal labour: (1) the first type is called *Tamgogula*. This takes place when the chief or headmen summons the members of the village to work in his garden. He throws a feast for the labourers after which the work begins. The men begin with the chief's garden and then cut in turn the garden plots of everyone in the village. This rotational basis of working in different fields in the village is reproduced at each successive stage of gardening; at the fencing, planting of yams, bringing in supports, and finally at the weeding, which is done by women (Malinowski, 1972, pp. 160-161). (2) *Lubalabisa* is characterised by a wider network of domain and is the case in which several villages agree to work their gardens by communal labour (ibid, p. 161). (3) The third type *Kabutu* is when a chief or headman, or man of wealth and influence summons his dependents or his relative-in-law to work for him. The owner is obliged to give food to all those co-operating (ibid). (4) The fourth form of communal labour is called *Ta'ula*. This takes place whenever a number of villagers agree to do one stage of gardening in common, on the basis of reciprocity (ibid). (5) The same sort of communal labour extending over all stages of gardening is called *Kari'ula* (ibid).

6. 3. 3 An Agrarian Society in Transition

a) A Shift Towards Contractual Labour

According to Chayanov, "the essential characteristic of business firms or capitalist enterprises was that they operated with hired workers in order to earn profits. By contrast, peasant family farms, as Chayanov defines them, normally employed no hired wage labor – none whatsoever (Thorner, 1987, p. xiii)." The agriculture system that was a collective enterprise characterised by self-sufficiency and communal and family labour has become more individualistic in

the Thadou-Kuki villages. So, the new 'theka system' has become more popular. This system is still functional to a marginal rich landowners who have more lands and agricultural fields than they can handle. Labour therefore gradually takes a more commodity form. *Lom kijoh* means selling of one's lom or group of labourers. If the allotted work is completed before the contract time, the owner can sell off the lom to some other landowner. Labour has attained a monetary value in this instance. Karl Marx in his "*Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (vol.1)*" looks at how individual acts of useful labour are transformed into commodities (Marx, 1954). He writes, "...peasant who produces with his own means of production will either gradually be transformed into a small capitalist who also exploits the labor of others, or he will suffer the loss of his means of production...and be transformed into a wage worker" (Marx, 1951, pp. 193-194). Useful labour is therefore transformed into commodities only in a society in which the products of labour take the form of the commodity (Morrison, 1995, p. 66).

This practice was common among the Meiteis of the valley in Manipur. The fact that it is widely practiced today among the hill tribes of Manipur could be attributed to the result of cultural contact. Moreover, it can be attributed to an indicator of the monetization of the labour system in the hills. In Motbung village, the type of tenancy practice is '*loushan*' and '*tangkhai chabi*', the latter is a Manipuri term. In the case of '*loushan*', the labourer takes whatever is left after the landowner has taken his share. The amount is at the disposition of the landowner. In *tangkhai chabi*, the landowner and the labourer shares the produce into equal halves. There is another mode of leasing out of land, viz., *theka* and *nikhotha*. *Theka* is the term used for the existing contract form of arrangement where the labourers are engaged for a period, for instance, during the harvesting season or the weeding season in wet-rice cultivation. *Theka* can be called a 'contract system of labour'. The period of contract continues until the work allotment is finished. It is made between a landowner and a group of labourers, who share the payment among themselves. The payment whether in

cash or in kind is made only after the completion of the allotted job. *Nikhotha* on the other hand is on a daily basis and payment is ideally made at the end of the day. This practice is still continued today. In *nikhotha*, the landowner has to provide refreshment like tea and snacks to the labourer during lunchtime. In the case of the *theka* system, the cultivators are to provide refreshments for their own consumption.

In Tujung Vaichong, an almost negligible percentage of the population thrives mainly as agricultural labourers on other farms. An informant Jangsat narrates how he works in different lands based on '*nikhotha*'³¹ in which payment ranges from person to person. The agreement for the amount is fixed by word of mouth and does not require paper work. The rate for the '*nikhotha*' is rupees fifty per day for females and rupees sixty per day for males. *Theka* system of labour arrangement is also practiced by some people. Land is usually leased out to the Nepalis based on half-share of the produce also called the '*tangkhai chabi* system.' Payment is made both in kind and cash according to the convenience of the remunerator. Another respondent Nengpi³² narrates her mother's work experience as a labourer in other farms. Her mother works in a field owned by some big landowner. She works along with other fellow workers on contract basis called '*theka*' system during harvest time. If the rain wets the rice before it is properly stacked in the barn, then this affects the quality of the rice. So, the idea is to finish it within the least possible time. The field owner pays them about a thousand rupees to be shared among themselves.

b) Migrants Spaces for Labour

Another change is on the basis for recruitment of labour in the hills. The question of who cultivates the land in tribal societies brings out another aspect unique to tribal societies. In the past, clanship and kinship network had played

³¹ Where payment is made on a daily basis.

³² Nengpi, 21st November 2007 (interviewed inside the bus between kangpokpi and Imphal)

an important role in the space for labour, but this is slowly changing today. Bond of kinship operative through families, clans and kindred govern production and distribution. However, there have been remarkable changes in this area, where migrants are recruits in the case of shortage of farm hands in the family. Another reason is that there is lesser dependence on agriculture as the primary occupation. Another factor leading to labour shortages is created by highly educated younger generations who prefer tertiary sector employment opportunities (Singh, in Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 124).

Today when a landowner recruits labourers, selection is based mainly on availability. This is because of the lesser dependence on agriculture (and on land) as a means of livelihood and other alternative means of income like government jobs and business enterprises. Of the criteria for recruitment, the landowner considers the following--

- A person of one's relations
- Availability
- Mostly non-tribals or Nepalis³³ (because they charge cheaper rates)
- Character or accountability like hard worker, honesty, self-sufficiency

In the case where families do not lease out their land, the adult members usually go to work in farms.

Most of the villagers in Tujang Vaichong are cultivators; part time or full time and even those who are employed in government services are either directly or indirectly involved in it. Nevertheless, many of them have either partly or fully

³³ The definition of migrants will differ according to the person defining it. For some like the insurgent group Revolutionary People's Front, the migrant group are all the non-Manipuris especially the Biharis working as labourers or businesspersons in Manipur. The Motbung Chief opines that the migrants or non-tribals in his village are Deshwalis and Nepalis whose occupation are business and dairy farming and contribute to the village economy. The Nepalis or Gorkhas have lived in Manipur for decades.

leased out their lands to neighbouring non-tribals or Nepali migrants through the system of '*tangkhai chabi*' (half share of the produce).

In Tujang Vaichong, the concept of 'out-sider', referring to the Nepalis, have lessened as they prove to be an indispensable part of the village economy. There is, however, lesser case of intermarriage amongst them as compared to the neighbouring Thadou-Kuki villages. In Motbung, the concept of the 'other' is clearly defined and the chief assisted by the village authority members has very strict rules against the transfer of land from a tribal to a non-tribal as per the constitution. The village council spearheaded by the Chief is very effective in Motbung and stringent rules are laid down by the council. Any person selling land to a non-tribal is severely dealt with. The Nepalis being more business minded has set up many thriving shops in the village centres. The majority of the migrants in Motbung are classified under two cultural communities—the Deshwalis and the Nepalis. The 2001 census records a separate Motbung for Nepali with 79 household and 384 populations.³⁴

Kangpokpi being an urban town, the concept of 'out-sider' and 'in-sider' is not very vivid. There are many cases of intermarriage. Business transactions and partnerships are done at a rapid rate. Since the laws of not transferring land to non-tribals also applies here, there has been many cases in which a Nepali male married to a Kuki woman has taken the title of the wife, going against the patriarchal societal norms for benefit. In most cases, the Nepalis being originally cattle herders live mainly by supplying milk to the population. Therefore, the occupation of milk supplying has been considered the sole occupation of this population.

Thus, there is a replacement of family labour by hired labour. Since the sale of agricultural products is not sufficient, the peasants also sell their labour power

³⁴ Census of India, 2001, District Census Handbook, Record Structure: Village Directory

as subsidiary sources of income (Banaji, 1976, p. 5). Banaji writes on Kautsky's Agrarian question:

The growth of capitalism in the towns is by itself sufficient to transform completely the peasantry's established way of life, even before capital has itself entered agricultural production and independently of the antagonism between big and smallholdings. But capital does not confine itself to industry. When it is strong enough, it invades agriculture (Banaji, 1976, p. 5).

6. 4 The Civilising Process: Forest Use and Shifting Cultivation

6.4.1 'Jhumming' or 'Shifting Cultivation' as a Heritage

Shifting cultivation is also known as slash-and-burn or swidden in the English language, whereas in India the process of shifting cultivation has a different name in all the tribal belts (Bhowmick, 1980, p. 135). According to Lehman, the Burmese call fields cultivated in this manner *taun-ya* whereas the Indians call them Jhum (Lehman, 1963, p. 47). "In North East India, it is known as *Jhum* or *Jum*; in Orissa as *Podu*, *Dabi*, *Koman* or *Bringa*; in Baster as *Deppa*; *Kumari*, in Western Ghats, *Matra* in S.E. Rajasthan; the Maria call it *Penda*; *Bewar* or *Dahia* in Madhya Pradesh (Bhowmick, 1980, p. 135)." The Task Force on Shifting Cultivation under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Government of India has estimated that approximately 9.95 million hectares in the tribal and hilly areas of the nation are under shifting cultivation (Mahalingam, in Gupta (ed.), 1992, p. 20).

According to G.A. Grierson (1903-1928), the Thados (Thadous) are a migratory race, and do not occupy their villages for more than two or three years at a time, when they move on to a new place, more fit for cultivation. The staple food is rice, and it is produced through the ordinary *jhum* cultivation. They prefer woody spots, on the tops of the hills, for their villages (Grierson, 1990, p. 60). Gautam Bhadra (1975) wrote that the migratory habit of the Thadou-Kukis in the past was connected with their mode of production. The form of *jhum* cultivation constitutes burning and slashing method (ibid). However, with this type of

cultivation, they accepted migration as a means to raise the superior quality of produce that was raised on 'virgin soil'. He quoted that the agricultural produce of the Kookees (Kukis) is of superior quality to that of the Cacharries (Cacharis) and the Nagas, which may be owing to their habit of abandoning the soil after the first or second crop (Bhadra, 1975, p. 25-26).

Under this type of cultivation forest cover over a selected plot of land is first cut down and later burnt to ashes as the debris becomes dry. The ashes of the burnt wood serve as the fertilizer (Ganguly, 1993, p. 299). After the harvesting is done, the plot is abandoned and left fallow to allow regeneration of bamboo and other forests plants. If sufficient forestland is available, jhumming is done in the same area again only after ten years (ibid). The characteristics of jhum cultivation in Manipur are as follows:

- (1) Cutting and clearing of forest areas and burning of the dried biomass by fire,
- (2) Rotation of jhum land every four to seven years,
- (3) Use of human labour as the chief input,
- (4) Non-employment of animals, implements or machinery,
- (5) Collective ownership of land,
- (6) Reciprocal labour sharing and
- (7) Mixed cropping system.³⁵

The Chief (Haosa), who is the owner of the village land and responsible to the welfare of the villagers assisted by his council of ministers, earmarks the site for cultivation. He selects a fertile forested area within the demarcated area at the beginning of the agriculture season and distributes land to each individual family of the village. The size of area allotted to a family depends to a large extent on the number of working hands available in the family (Singsit, 2010, p.

³⁵ Land Rights Autonomy and Conflict in Manipur (Chapter 17), Planning Department Government of Manipur, Draft Manipur State Development Report, http://manipur.nic.in/planning/DraftMSDR/Default_DraftMSDR.htm

73). The villagers go to the forest and locate a site and each family would mark by cutting portion of tree trunk or tie bunches of grasses in the border of his fields making '*Louchan*' (Haokip, 2009). The individual households do not have absolute ownership over the land cultivated by them; their rights are of the nature of usufructs. They can hold the land so long as they make effective use of it and as soon as they stop cultivation, their rights cease (Singsit, 2010, p. 73). In the village of Tujang Vaichong, the villagers have to seek the chief's permission to lease out the land to them. The permission granted is valid for a year and have to be renewed every year.³⁶

6.4.2 Debates on Shifting Cultivation

Recent debates have posited shifting cultivation or Jhumming under two main perspectives: as the natural way of life of the tribal people and as detrimental to the forest economy. Shifting cultivation is defined by many as the natural way of life of some tribal people and the natural source of earning their livelihood (Bhowmick, 1980, p. 134). For others, it is detrimental to forest economy and therefore, to national economy as it leads to destruction of forest due to erosion of soil (ibid). The supporters of jhumming are of the view that it is more than sustenance; rather it reflects the reason for existence. Shifting cultivation is deeply rooted in the Kuki psyche, having evolved through generations, and being rooted in customs, belief and folklore. It influences the tribe's mindset and cultural ethos of its agrarian society. This is evident from the various ceremonies observed by them, which is related to nature. They have given due respect and appreciation from the dwellers for it is the provider of their sustenance and livelihood. Their traditional way of living and the tribal mindset have given respect for environment (Haokip, 2009).³⁷

³⁶ Kipgen, Konkhochong, Acting Chief (on behalf of her son) of Tujang Vaichong village, interviewed on 9th November, 2008

³⁷ Haokip, George T. 'Kuki Tradition and Shifting Cultivation,' in <http://kukiforum.wordpress.com/2009/05/16/kuki-tradition-and-shifting-cultivation>, May 16, 2009 (Accessed on 3rd June, 2011).

Jhum cultivation has special significance in the ethos of tribal society and their social relationships, cultural values and mythical beliefs are directly linked with it (Singsit, 2010, p. 158). The Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee chairman, who is also the president of Sadar Hills Sub Division of Senapati District of Manipur opined that, as Jhumming constitute an important lifeline for the people, an alternative need to be set-up if the government plans to do away with it.³⁸ Even in Kangpokpi town, which is urban, and not under chieftainship system, jhumming is done in the neighbouring hill called *T.Khullien*. Those who want land for cultivation have to pay tax or '*gam-pan*' or 'land tax' to the Town Committee, which is set up under the District Council of Manipur.³⁹

Similarly, the Baiga tribe of the Central Provinces of India has exalted the *bewar* cultivation into a 'regular cultus,' and have adopted it as the symbol of their tribe (Elwin, 1986, p. 106).⁴⁰ The first serious attempt to put an end to *bewar* cultivation was made during the settlement operation of 1867-69. It was decided that 'according to all positive law, according to the Settlement Code, and according to the custom of the country', the Baiga had 'no title to proprietary right or to occupancy right in the tracts over which they roamed' (Elwin, 1986, p. 111). From 1867 to the end of the century, zealous forest officers determined to make them stop their axe-and-hoe cultivation and took to the plough pursued the unfortunate Baigas. At the same time, much of their hunting was stopped and some of them were even forced to make heaps of their precious bows and arrows and burnt them (Elwin, 1964, p. 148).

³⁸ Guite, Haokholien, Chairmen of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, interviewed on 26th November, 2008

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ The word 'bewar' is used to describe both the practice of shifting cultivation and the patches of forest which is cultivated

According to Verrier Elwin, the tradition of shifting cultivation of the Baiga brought them into conflict with the colonial government in two ways (ibid, p. 146). The first was their beliefs that they were born from the womb of mother earth; therefore, it was a very wrong thing for them to lacerate her breast with the plough (also in Elwin, 1986, pp. 106-107).⁴¹ The second was their beliefs that they were the true *Pashupati* or lords of animals, so, they should have the freedom of movement in the forest for their hunting expedition (Elwin, 1964, pp. 147-148). "Nothing showed more clearly the evils of an administration's ignorance of tribal mythology and indifference to its custom than the way the old government dealt with the Baigas on these two points (ibid)."

When the Baigas were forced to use the plough, many of them were reduced to poverty, as the agricultural implement was tabooed for them and they suffered from psychological disturbance deep in their souls of the use of it (also in Elwin, 1986 (1939), p. 108).⁴² "Robbed of their bows and arrows, they are no longer lords of the forest, the great *shikaris* of former times (Elwin, 1964, p. 147)." Tribal value orientation and is one of the basic causes underlying the continuance of

⁴¹ The Baigas believed that they were established in the practice of *bewar* by *Bhagavan* himself who, when he called all the tribes of the world together to make a king, at first chose the Baiga. But Nanga Baiga begged that the Gond, his brother, might be king in his place. *Bhagavan* was pleased at this request, and, as a mark of his favour took Nanga Baiga by the hand and placed him on his throne by his side. He granted his prayer to make the Gond king, but he gave the Baiga an even greater blessing. 'All the kingdoms of the world,' he said, 'may fall to pieces, but he who is made of earth and is *Bhumiaraja*, lord of the earth, shall never forsake it. You will make your living from the earth. You will dig roots and eat them. You will cut wood and carry it on your shoulders. Your wife will pick leaves and sell them. You must not tear the breasts of your Mother the earth with the plough like the Gond and Hindu. You will cut down trees, burn them, and sow your seeds in the ashes. But you will never become rich, for if you did you would forsake the earth, and then there would be no one to guard it and keep its nails in place.' Then *Bhagavan* showed Nanga Baiga how to cut *bewar* and sow seed in the ashes of burnt trees; and when he had taught him everything, he called him to receive gifts of seed. This legend is told, and believed, throughout the length and breadth of the Baiga country (Elwin, 1986, pp. 106-107).

⁴² It is commonly believed that the present poverty of the tribe is due to their disobedience of *Bhagavan's* command; Mother Earth is insulted when her children tear her breasts, and now refuses to supply their needs. For this reason, their magic has decayed, the crops fail, and they are subject to the vengeance of wild beasts (Elwin, 1986 (1939), p. 108).

shifting cultivation among most of the tribes (Singsit, 2010, p. 158). Elwin was of the opinion that the tribes must be assisted to come to terms with their own past so that their present and future will not be a denial of their past but a natural evolution from it (Elwin, 1964, p. 302).⁴³ The ban on shifting cultivation is destructive to the mode of earning a livelihood as they fail to provide an alternative mode of livelihood to shifting cultivators (Savyasaachi, 1991). Though the dominant voice advocated the use of technology over traditional practices like shifting cultivation, the technical progress in agriculture is in essence, a method for improving the techniques of wringing the goodness out of the soil, and is therefore hazardous rather than beneficial (Kautsky, as cited in Moore, 2008, p.1-3).

At the other extreme end is the opinion that emphasised the evil effects of shifting cultivation as both devastating and far reaching in degrading the environment and deteriorating the ecosystem. The practice of Shifting Cultivation has been condemned as inefficient, inherently wasteful and a threat to the rapidly diminishing area under forest covers. This condemnation represents an almost unanimous consensus (Sharma, 1994, p. 143). "Modern technologists believe that the tribal mode of earning a livelihood makes them lazy workers. The current technological explanation of the environmental crises holds the mode of shifting cultivation responsible for destruction of the forest. The use of the forest materials, even when considered on its own terms, that is, not in terms of the market economy, is wasteful because it over-utilises them. In terms of market economy, shifting cultivation does not generate revenue and, therefore, it is inefficient and unprofitable. Study of man-nature relations of tribals and its impact on the natural environment questions the technological view which has labelled tribals as lazy workers (Savyasaachi, 1991, p. 25)."

⁴³ In 1954, Verrier Elwin was appointed advisor on Tribal Affairs to the North Eastern Frontier Agency. He became a citizen of India after Independence.

Panda and Barapanda wrote on the ecological impact of Jhumming. The large-scale deforestation have resulted in the destruction of valuable timbers and prevented the generation of forest. The clearing of forest exposed the barren rocks and this culminates in the loss of soil and plant nutrients (Panda et al, Gupta (ed.), 1992, p. 140). "Besides these factors, its adverse effects are also found in the decrease of wild life population and silting of reservoirs and river beds, lowering the subsoil water and drying up of the springs in the mountain slopes. This process not only affects the environment & ecosystem but also affects the economic life of the people of the state (ibid)."

In Manipur, soil conservation and land use programmes initiated to control or reverse the deleterious consequences of Jhum are carried out by two agencies, viz., the department of horticulture and the forest department.⁴⁴ The voice from the educated section of the locals also resonate the ecological consequences of Jhumming and its irrelevances today since existing population density far exceeds the carrying capacity.⁴⁵ In the framework of linear historical development and normative order of industrial production, "...social formation progresses from simple to complex, primitive to modern, savage to civilized, and irrational and rational. Thus, jhum cultivators are historically backward, and those who work with thermal projects are historically advanced (Savyasaachi, in Visvanathan (ed.), 2001, p. 80)." The tradition of shifting cultivation is thought to be in conflict with the tradition of modernization and development (ibid, p. 83).

6.4.3 Regulations on Forest Use and Practice of Shifting Cultivation

Colonial land revenue settlements and forests laws were intended to curb and in swift stages and finally eradicate shifting cultivation (Sharma, 1994, p. 143). In

⁴⁴ Land Rights Autonomy and Conflict in Manipur (Chapter 17), Planning Department Government of Manipur, Draft Manipur State Development Report, http://manipur.nic.in/planning/DraftMSDR/Default_DraftMSDR.htm

⁴⁵ Kipgen, Enoch, Asst. Head Master, L.K. Junior High School, Tujang Vaichong Village

general, before the advent of British rule in India, the regulation of people's use of forest was mainly done through the local customs (Kulkarni, 1987, p. 2143). The beginning of a systematic forest policy begun in 1855 when the then Governor General Dalhousie issued a memorandum on forest conservation (ibid). The Forest Act of 1865 was made to regulate forest exploitation, management and preservation (ibid). "For the first time an attempt was made to regulate the collection of forest produce by the forest dwellers. Thus, the socially regulated practices of the local people were to be restrained by law (ibid)." The Forest Regulations sought to completely prohibit the practice of shifting cultivation in the Central Provinces (Sharma, 1994, p. 143).

The Indian Forest Act of 1878, "allowed the state to expand the commercial exploitation of the forest while putting curbs on local use for subsistence. This denial of village forest rights provoked countrywide protest. The history of colonial rule is punctuated by major rebellions against colonial forestry—in Chotanagpur in 1893, in Bastar in 1910, in Gudem-Rampa in 1879-80 and again in 1922-23, in Midnapur in 1920, and in Adilabad in 1940"⁴⁶. Under the Forest Act of 1878, forests were divided into (1) reserved forests, (2) protected forests, and (3) village forests (ibid). These regulations were formally initiated in 1894 (Anderson, et al., 1988, p. 36).

Robert S. Anderson and Walter Huber explanation of the implication of the forests divisions is relevant to our field. They wrote, "Reserved forests were exclusively for the use of the Forest Department except for certain minor concessions, such as gathering of the fruit of the trees and cutting of the grass, on payment of small dues. In the reserved forests, the surrounding villagers had no rights other than the ones explicitly permitted by the state. The protected forests were also managed by the Forest Department, but the people of the surrounding villages had certain rights in them, such as gathering fruits and other produce of

⁴⁶ Guha, Ramachandra. 'The Prehistory if Community Forestry in India,' *Environmental History*, in http://www.environmentalhistory.net/articles/6-2_Guha.pdf, (accessed on 4th June, 2011)

the trees, and cutting timber and wood specifically for the use of the villagers (but not for sale). They also had freedom to graze their livestock and hunt wild game for domestic purposes. Over the protected forests, the villagers had all rights not specifically taken away by the state. The village forest were the communal property of the villagers" (Anderson, et. al., 1988, p. 37).

In 1988, the forest policy was changed to be more accommodative towards the local people (Saxena et al, 1999, p. 187). The new policy replaced the earlier focus on commercial exploitation of forests by the twin objectives of maintaining ecological stability and meeting the forest-based needs of forest dwellers and other rural poor living in or near forest areas (ibid). The emphasis of the new policy was to protect the legal rights, concessions and privileges of tribal and other local villagers. The new policy encouraged the involvement of local women and men in the protection, management and development of forests (ibid).

The Indian Forest Act of 1927 was an attempt to regulate the rights of the people over forestland and produce as the government gradually increased its control over the forests by strengthening the forest department (Kulkarni, 1987, p. 2143). Subsequently, there was a steady and considerable increase in revenue obtained from the forests (ibid). After Independence, there was some rethinking on the issue of forest policy in putting the national needs over the claims of the communities living in and around the forests (ibid, 2144). The National Forest Policy was issued in 1952 with this in mind. "Though the traditional rights of the tribals were no longer recognised as rights, in 1894 they were declared in the British Forest Policy as 'rights and privileges.' In 1952 in the National Forest Policy these were further diluted into 'rights and concessions.' Now the tendency is to treat them merely as 'concessions' (Burman, in Chaudhuri (ed.), 1992, p. 143)." The subject of forests was included in the State list in the VII Schedule in the Constitution of India (Kulkarni, 1987, p. 2144). There was a major change which took place in 1976 and the subject of forests was transferred

from the State list to the Concurrent list through the 42nd amendment to the Constitution (ibid). Power over forests was transferred from the control of the state to the centre and the Government of India in the Forest Conservation Ordinance promulgated this in October 1980, which later became a bill (ibid). The Indian Forest Bill, 1980 besides including a provision for curtailing the rights and benefits of the local people over the forests prescribe severe punishments for forest offences (ibid).

Therefore, the revenue generation of the colonial period (1865 onwards) continued in the post-colonial period. "Additional responsibilities were added when social forestry was introduced in 1976, giving forest departments roles in promoting forestry on private and revenue land. Joint Forest Management has (since 1988), been a further element in the expanding remit of the forest bureaucracies. The signposts in this history are provided by the forests acts of 1878 and 1927, the Forest Policy of 1952, the National Commission on Agriculture of 1976, which inaugurated social forestry, the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, the 1988 Forest Policy, and the GOI Joint Forest Management Resolution of 1990, followed by different state resolutions (Sundar, et al, 1999, p.27)."

6.4.4 Impact of the Forest Policies

The local inhabitants of Tujang Vaichong, Motbung and Kangpokpi also experience the implications of the various forest policies. Changes are evident in the land laws of villages especially in the case of forest laws in which the Chief and his Council of Ministers or Village Council incorporates the National laws of the country in their formulations of local law. Mrs. Konkhochong Kipgen, acting chief of the village says that the chieftainship system acts as a cultural retainer as well as the preserver and reservoir for various cultural practices and customs. There are differences between leaders who were elected and the hereditary Chief in terms of the sentiment they have towards the land and the people of the

village. Commercialisation in terms of forest produce is check to a certain extent in the jurisdiction of the chieftainship system.

The Land laws in Tujang Vaichong includes: Firstly, the villagers are not suppose to sell the land allotted to them as gift-deeds by the chief to an outsider who has no plans to permanently settle in the village. The lands allotted are therefore not transferable, but is attributable to the same ancestry. A particular villager is in possession of it as long as the person is in the village. However, it will directly go back to the chief in case he wants to migrate to another village. Therefore, the nature of proprietorship is equivalent to temporary ownership and they cannot use it as collateral.

Secondly, there are also certain restrictions regarding forest laws. There are three types of forest area: Open reserved area, protected area and Village area. This is classification of forest is according to the Forest Act of 1878, which is still effective today. According to results of the household survey, two types of tenants occupy the village homestead: (1) There are no individual lands with proper patta system but there are paper deeds. (2) The individual land are mostly allotted by the chief as gifts. The chief opened some areas every year to the villagers for jhumming or *thinglhang lei* and for cutting woods in the mountains. The villagers have to seek the chief's permission to lease out the land to them. They have to bring with them a rooster as a token or this is also done through the traditional '*cha-omna*' (where tea is served to the chief before a request is put forward). The permission granted is valid for a year and have to be renewed every year. For cutting of woods, the chief opened the forest for the public for about 2-3 months (mainly in the month of December, January and February). During that period, the villagers have to collect enough woods to last for their consumption throughout the year. In exceptional cases, a new settler can get access to the woods to build their house. However, the restriction is against using these woods for commercial purposes. These activities are done in

parts of the forest, which are not under the forest department of the Indian government.

Moreover, the settlement laws regarding those who are residing in the homestead area are—

- a) to dutifully pay the '*changseo*' or village fund traditionally in the form of a basket of paddy or in cash.⁴⁷
- b) to abide by laws laid down in the villages meant for citizens
- c) neither to steal nor distort law and order in the village

The Chief and the Village Council give the new settlers an orientation on their arrival. New settlers are allowed to take enough woods in the village to build their house. Prior to that, they are required to seek the permission of the chief to get membership in the village. In the case of Tujang Vaichong, it is mandatory for the new settlers to take membership in the local church.⁴⁸ The house tax for each house paid annually is Rupees 15, which is collected by the chief and submitted it in bulk to the government through the SDO in charge.⁴⁹ The homestead area falls under the category of 'village area.'

The main land laws⁵⁰ in Motbung village were: Firstly, annual tax of rupees 50 per house or 1 basket of paddy (*changseu*). Secondly, the forest is divided into two areas: (1) There is the Protected Forest Area, where no woods are allowed to be cut. For violating the laws in the protected area, there was an instance where

⁴⁷ In Tujang Vaichong village, the villagers protest against the giving of 'Changseo' or tributary gifts to the chief of the village. So, the practice was stop before my field visit.

⁴⁸ The chief have made a strict rule that no other church besides the Kuki Baptist convention is allowed in the village. The church has a history of being the first Kuki Church in Manipur and was established and built in 1916.

⁴⁹ *ibid*

⁵⁰ Kaikhosei, S.L., Chief of Motbung, Interviewed on 13th October, 2008 and S.L. Vumkhopao Lhouvum, Joint Secretary of Members of Village Authority

a villager was fined '*voh-cha*'⁵¹ or 'pig' for encroaching and violating the rules of the protected area. He had cut down some trees for his personal purpose. This area comes under the protection of the Chief of the village. (2) The second type is the Open Reserve Area, where activities like jhumming, grazing and firewood collection were allowed to be done. Villagers are allowed access to firewood, grazing, woods for new village settlers and jhumming (under the direction of the chief who specifies the site for the year cultivation). The non-tribals (mostly Nepali migrants) pay grazing tax whereas for other villagers, everything is covered under the annual tax or '*changseu*'. An informant, pointing at a vast expanse of forest said they were the reserve of the Forest department of Motbung under the office name, 'Range Forest Officer, Motbung Range.' There was strict restriction by the office to the local population not to encroach those areas.

Thirdly, new settlers will have to get the permission of the chief. No villagers can buy or sell land to an outsider without the chief's permission. Settlers will have to take registration after which they can access some of the rights due to a villager. Fourthly, the leasing or selling out of land to non-tribal is by actual norm of customary laws not allowed but there are exceptional cases of intermarriage between the tribal and non-tribal where consideration has to be made. Fifthly, there can be no commercial transaction of land to people of other villages without the chief's permission but this is not necessary in the case of land transaction between two members of the village. Punishment for offence ranges from banishment from the village or an order to the seller to buy it back from his client. The village homestead in Motbung comprises of two types of land: (1) There are individual lands with proper patta system.⁵² They also call it

⁵¹ It is the custom of the Thadou-Kukis in particular and the Kukis in general to be penalized for a wrong act in terms of pigs.

⁵² This pattas are actually paper deeds and differ with the pattas of the GOI. As for Kangpokpi, which is not under chieftainship system, the Sub-Division Officers or District Magistrates, under whose jurisdiction the village landfall issues documents, which is considered to be equivalent to Patta in the valley (Gangte, 2010, p. 132).

'dag-chitha' or paper deeds. Patta is actually not legal as the whole land is in the name of the chief. Temporarily patta or patta for namesake is taken for security sake to avert land conflict. The term 'gift-deed' by the chief is applicable. (2) Individual land allotted by the chief without patta system.

Kangpokpi represents altogether a different entity. It is not under chieftainship system but under the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee.⁵³ It is under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration. In administration matters, the local customary laws are applied side by side with general administration system of the Indian government.⁵⁴ Land laws are still based on the customary laws. Jhumming is mostly done on T.Khullien Moul, a mountain owned by the neighbouring Naga village. They leased out the land to the people of Kangpokpi who have to pay taxes according to the size of the land allotted to them. The prices ranging from Rupees 200 to above based on the area size of the land. The tax paid is called '*gam-pan*' or '*lam-pan*.' Wet-Rice cultivation or *phailei* is very scarce. They are mostly done in the neighbouring villages like Lungpho gam, kaithel manbi or the villages in Imphal-Tamenglong Road like Tujang Vaichong, Gelnel, Bungmoul etc. There is restriction against taking sand from the riverbeds as this might cause landslides. If there is a vacant plot, then an interested contender can approach the authority and register for membership. He still has to register if he wants to buy a plot of land that belongs to another. If a villager wants to sell his land to a person of another village, he has to inform the KUTC. A different form of patta land has entered into Kangpokpi and it is called *jamma*

⁵³ The meeting of the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee is done at least once every month. Besides the compulsory meeting, there is the emergency meeting that is conducted according to the requirement of the circumstances. The biggest assembly is held at the end of the year. The members do not have a salary. However, an honorary pay of rupees 1000 is paid to the Chairperson, Vice chairperson and Secretary. The others are paid Rs. 500. Moreover, a sitting allowance of Rs. 100 is paid to all authority members on every meeting.

⁵⁴ Guite, Haokholien, Chairman of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Interviewed on 26th November, 2008

bandi or *Dag Chitha*. Hill house tax paid annually is rupees 15. The KUTC collects them and pays them over to the ADC office.⁵⁵

6.5 Conclusions

As compared to the tribal land system, the land system under the caste system has evolved through many stages of reformation and is more affected by feudalism, and later on by capitalism. Earlier, in the pre-British period, the relation to land of a villager is strictly defined by his position in the caste hierarchy, which is ascribed by birth. However, there was self-sufficiency. When the British introduced private property in land, the village economic self-sufficiency was dissolved and economy became increasingly an integral part of wider global community.

Raymond Firth's criteria for describing the Polynesian society in Tikopia as primitive in terms of culture and economy were lack of modern equipment and of the knowledge of the techniques for using it and non-monetary character (Firth, 1959, p. 31). Oomen (1984) has also agreed that transport and communication ushers in urban characters in a rural area. The nearness to the National Highway 39 to Motbung and Kangpokpi enables better means of transport and communication which means seeping in of the rubrics of globalisation like marketization, commercialisation and monetization. This is evident in the way Tujang Vaichong compared to the other two is more grounded in traditional values and has lesser access to facilities of development. The village is far away from the National Highway and is another 40 kilometres away from it. Kangpokpi, as an emerging town, is valued higher because of the presence of modern amenities like education system and government offices. Therefore, there is rural to urban migration towards the town, and as a result the town is over populated. Occupation is also highly diversified.

⁵⁵ *ibid*

The greatest changes and impact of capitalism is witness in the labour system. The Chanyonavian model of classical model of peasant society of pure peasant family farms is no longer relevant today. The space for labour has changed. It becomes a buyable commodity and is 'commoditised' to use the Marxian term. It is no longer the bonds of kinship, operative through families of clans and kindred, which govern production and distribution. There is a replacement of family or communal labour for hired or waged labour. It is no longer an activity done through group cooperation, but more of an individualistic activity. 'Lom Kijoh', meaning the selling of one's labour is a case to prove the point. We see the gradual commodification of labour from being a co-operative enterprise to a contractual form.

The dependency on agriculture and the pressure on land are lessened by occupational diversification even in villages. There is a move towards the tertiary sector. Most household in contemporary rural societies live from a mixture of livelihood strategies. There is a shift towards non-farm enterprises in villages, including villagers moving out of the villages to urban town to seek for better employment prospects. There is a gradual shift from land as a livelihood to land as a commodity.

Jhumming is not only a means for sustenance, but also constitutes the cultural lore and habits of the people. Policy makers need to be sensitised in this area and should make a liable alternative to it, as it constitutes the lifeline of the people. The forest laws which are meant to protect the forest and its resources alienate the local people who have been caretakers of the forest for generations, and know the forest better than the state officials. It is laws made without consideration of the 'ways of life' and 'world-view' of the governed. Today, there the government laws existed side-by-side with the local customary laws of the villages and towns. So, there is a two-fold system of authority system for the local people's movement in the forest, which makes the forest and its resources' accessibility almost impossible.

Conclusion

The thesis explores the question of 'land' in tribal economy with special reference to the Thadou-Kuki groups of the Hill Tribes of Manipur. It tries to posit the issues of land and identity of the Thadou-Kukis within the bigger debates of colonialism and post-colonial theory, which is relevant to most post-colonial societies of the world. It can also be construed as a study of an agricultural society's interface with modernization and the modes of adjustments and conflicts that arise due to changes caused by the impositions of the colonial and post-colonial agencies.

The Thadou-Kukis, as evident from our study, had close bonding with nature and they allowed it to influence their socio-cultural lives. The ecology influences the cultural constitution of the society as well as the relations within the social structure. The society was predominantly an agricultural as well as a hunter-gatherer society with ownership of land as a collective enterprise. They had high degree of respect for the environment, which sustains them. The fact that it is valued is signified by the proof that agriculture is highly ritualised. The concept of 'reciprocity' determines their relationship with nature, which is one of mutual respect and consideration for the other living organisms in the cosmos. This mark of respect for land is reflected in the socio-cultural lives of the people, which in turn determine the way the society is organised. So, it is not just the culture of humankind influencing the conceptualization of ecological relations but also the influence of nature on the social structure of the society under study.

Their concepts of rights to land and forest of the Thadou-Kukis were governed by the application of their un-codified, un-written laws sponsored by traditions and customs. These customary rules were framed within the background of the understanding that tribal identification centred on territorial affiliation. There emerged the need for protecting their territoriality

through the establishment of the institution of chieftainship system in the society. I would like to clarify the jurisdiction of autonomy of the Thadou-Kuki chief in the present age. If the whole land in a Thadou-Kuki village belongs to the chief of the village, is there a need for discussing inheritance laws in the society? Should that not be confined only to the chief's family? The truth is landownership exists under chieftainship system too, but in a form quite different from other land systems. There are different types of proprietors in the village. There are those who procure permanent ownership rights to their land through the chief. This can be of many types. There are minimal percentages of cases in which the chief actually sells the land to the villagers. In addition, some are given rights to the land because they had assisted the chief at the time the village was established. The two types can be termed as permanent ownership in which the landowner can dispose and transfer the land at his free will. Inheritance laws are applicable in the two types. There are also types of landowner who are gifted by the chief. In theory, the land is temporarily owned. The land allotted to them cannot be sold and if the family wishes to migrate to another village, the land will automatically return to the chief. However, this type of ownership assumes a sort of permanency over years of residence. So, inheritance laws can also apply to this one. There are the temporarily allotted sites for Jhum lands or kitchen gardens usually in mountainside or vacant plots of the villages. This type of ownership is temporary and has to be renewed after a period fixed by the chief and the council of ministers. Inheritance laws do not apply to this type. The Thadou-Kuki chief is endowed with "...the rights of management of community resources and in the exercise of this he is authorised by tradition" (Burman, 1992, p. 275).

The colonial administrators and the missionary were equally effective in restructuring space and society. They not only entered their lands, but into their lives and activities as well. Whereas the administrator was influential at a holistic and policymaking level, the influence of the missionary in lieu of

their day-to-day interaction with local inhabitants was significant. Studying the missionary's influence offer a better potential for analysing the dynamics of intercultural relations in the colonial setting. Following McKim Marriott's theory of 'parochialization', this is a case in which elements from the 'great tradition' becomes confine to particular local 'little traditions' (Marriot, 1967). However, it goes beyond Marriot's theory in that Christianity, as brought forth by the American Baptist Missionaries, is also adjusted to the culture of the society under study.

Both the stipulations of evangelical Christianity and the terms of colonial law contributed in undoing the hierarchies of village life. The greatest impact of colonialism on the Thadou-Kuki society was that they were coerced to a sedentarised mode of existence, which had corresponding affect on their mode of subsistence and agricultural system. The relation between the coloniser and colonised is characterised by ambivalence. The local natives constituted both a useful ally and a competent opponent for the Britishers' at different points of time. Both the Saidian and Homi Babha theory did not see the interplay between the colonial rulers and the native as a discourse in which the local people were mere passive victims. Similarly, in the case of the Thadou-Kukis, the resistance is evident in incidents of war as the 'Kuki Uprising (1917-1919)' and the fight for territorial integrity in the form of demand for autonomy and 'self-rule' in the present era.

In defining the socio-spatial categories, Evans-Pritchard (1969) concept of 'structural distance' says a homogenised community becomes possible through a common cultural identity that transcends space and time. The policy of Col. McCulloch in the 19th century of settling the Kukis along exposed frontiers and using them as buffers against fractious tribes has a lasting impact today. They are today found settled in scattered pattern all over Manipur hills as well as in Nagaland, Myanmar (Burma) and Chittagong

Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. This has created problems today in uniting a group of people who otherwise have common language, culture, origin and history and constitute the largest tribe in terms of population in Manipur. Liisa Malkki (1992), while not denying the importance of place in the construction of identities, has posited that 'deterritorialization' and 'identity' are intimately linked. We find cases in our field like the various homeland movements, which today in Manipur context has been reduced to a demand for a separate district based on cultural sameness. The "...traditional linkage with the geographical settings through the generations has provided them the specific mentality to think themselves owner of the land concerned" (Sarkar, 2006, p. 8).

Another policy of the colonial administrator that led to alienation of land was the policy of indirect rule. The administration before the anti-colonial war was indifferent to the cause and needs of the Hill population. There was never any representative from the hill areas of Manipur. Though the amendments made in the administration after the 'Kuki Uprising' (1917-1919) was made with the aim of curtailing the liberties of the hill people, it actually recognised their existence as equal proprietors of a defined territory. After 1947, the administration of the Hill areas passed on from the colonial rulers to the Maharaja of Manipur and finally to the state agencies under the Indian Government. The State agencies in making laws for the Hill areas have continued the same mistake committed by the colonial rulers, which is an imposition of laws without consideration for the ruled. Subsequently, various Acts were passed for the administration of the hill areas. They were indirect attempts to slowly erode the land ownership of the hill tribes of Manipur as also of the Thadou-Kukis in the name of a uniform land policy. The traditional linkage with land also started losing its effectiveness and meanings.

The land rights discourses in the post-independent era do not paint a very different picture. They are a continuation of the colonial policies towards the hill tribes of Manipur and, are therefore, without genuine consideration and understanding of the governed. The Manipur Hill Peoples Administration Regulation Act-1947 reduced many chiefs of smaller villages with less than 20 tax-paying houses as unrecognised chief. For the rest of the chiefs who qualified the new criteria for a village, a new hierarchy of official control overshadowed the real basis of traditional administration. There were attempts to do away with the traditional tributary privileges of the chief. The state agencies likened the chiefs to be like the zamindars in mainland India and presumed their ruling to be dictatorial in nature. The Manipur Village Authorities in Hill Areas Act-1956 continued the onslaught by reducing the chief of the village that accepts the Act as ex-officio Chairman of the village authority. Moreover, the other traditional councillors' post was no longer hereditary and they had to be re-elected to continue in the post. The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reform Act of 1960 was an ambiguous one. On the one hand, it had provisions for protecting the land rights of the tribals like the section 158 which prohibits transmission of land to non-tribals and sub-section 2 (1) which excludes the hill areas from the MLR & LR Act. On the other hand, in the six and seventh amendments of the same Act attempted to remove and modify the very section that favoured the hill people. Moreover, there are no laws to protect those villages, which are in close proximity to the valley districts. The ongoing overlapping land issues and dual taxation of the villages that fall within these areas are examples of the need for laws to protect them.

The Manipur Hill Areas District Council Act, 1971 has been widely criticised because it does not provide legislative and financial powers. Consequently, the Sixth Schedule, which is supposed to provide these powers is demanded by the people. In making land laws, reforms and its implementations, there is

a need for the participation of the people for whom the law is meant is crucial for the formulation of appropriate laws to suit them. Similarly, the hill tribes have made demands in the form of protest and negotiations with the state. The demand put forward by the people has been for a separate land law that respect the customs and cultures of the locale and enables a 'real' self-rule in the hills of Manipur. The community is, therefore, a part of the "...ongoing struggles for new forms of democracy in the guise of a return to custom" (Sundar, 2005, p. 4430).

Jhumming is very central to the cultural lore of the people and is interlinked with many other institutions in the society like the chieftainship system, priest-hood system as well as the traditional belief system and worldview of the society. Besides, the restriction on jhumming as a mode of production system, the villagers' access to forest was curtailed by the various forest policies issued by the state. The main purpose of these acts, as it was first initiated by Governor General Dalhousie in 1865, was for forest conservation, management and preservation. However, this restraint the movements of the local people and as the rules became more stringent with each new Acts and amendments, finally alienated them from the forest. For instance, the Indian Forest Bill of 1980 prescribes severe punishments for forest offences.

Situating the issue in the context of the field areas in Tujang Vaichong and Motbung, the chief and the council of ministers have incorporated the land laws of the National Forest policies into the local laws of the villages. The area that comes under 'reserved area' is exclusively under the control of the forest department in both the villages. There are some areas of the forest marked out as 'open reserve area', which is opened to the villagers by the chief for various forms of agricultural activities or for cutting woods, after they formally seek permission. The 'protected area' is strictly protected by the chief in both the villages. So, the villagers, most of whom are dependent on agriculture as a means of survival, have nearly no access to the forest resources as their rights

to it are governed by a two-fold system: primarily by the system of chieftainship and secondly by the policies of the state. The site of jhumming in Kangpokpi is the mountain called *T.Khullien Moul* (Mountain). The mountain is the source of sustenance for the population as it is a thriving town and is over-populated, and therefore, lacks space for cultivation. If jhumming is done away with, the state agencies need to provide an alternative.

Inequality and marginalisation do not occur only in the public spheres of the society, but also within the domestic spheres in which women are further marginalised. The stringent laws of customary norms further aggravate the denial of land rights within the family where a certain section is marginalised. These customary laws are authorised with the duty of public administration and the control and management of their land and forests. Women in the Thadou-Kuki society are twice alienated from the possibility of land right. First, the rights to land of any individual or all villagers in the village are through the chief. Secondly, as per the customary norms, it is the man who is preferred for allocation of land. It is also the man who is usually in leadership and who is attributed the authority to decide who and how much should be allotted to a person. Then, in the household and within the domestic sphere, women are further sidelined in favour of the male members of the family. In analysing, the influence of the missionary women in changing the structure of gender relations within the household and community, religion represents a paradoxical emancipation. Emancipation exists to a certain extent, as it provides a space for women outside the domestic domain, but this does not mean their overall empowerment. The authority does not really influence upon the village administration in which their access to land is determined. The changes in women discrimination in inheritance laws could only bring forth by the customary law court with the support of the church.

Finally, the agrarian society's interface with modernization is best understood in the chapter on the issue of 'livelihood' where land is studied as a

productive entity. The nearness to the National Highway 39 to Motbung and Kangpokpi enables better means of transport and communication, which means seeping in of the rubrics of globalisation like marketization, commercialisation and monetization. This is evident in the way Tujang Vaichong compared to the other two is more grounded in traditional values and has lesser access to facilities of development. The village is far away from the National Highway and is another 40 kilometres away from it. Kangpokpi, as an emerging town, is valued higher because of the presence of modern amenities like education system and government offices. Therefore, there is rural to urban migration towards the town, and as a result, the town is over populated. Occupation is also highly diversified.

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experiment with alternative occupations other than farming while still holding on to cultivation. There is transformation to new patterns of development without letting go the time-honoured dependence on agriculture; as a result, the society becomes internally more complicated.

In discussing the relationship between 'Land' and 'Identity' in the society, the scope of the study encompasses both 'Geographical Territory' and 'Cultural Territory'. We see the external factors to the society in the form of colonialism and the post-colonial state resulting in restructuring of the society, both in terms of geographical relocation as also in the ideological and cultural reconstitution. The two are interdependent as geographical restructuring is always followed by ideological revolution. Changes in land relation cause redefinition of identity not necessarily only because of the physical change in the landscape or land structure, but because of ideological changes that accompanies the factors of changes. Therefore, identity as Malkki (1992) had said, "...is always mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories, et cetera."

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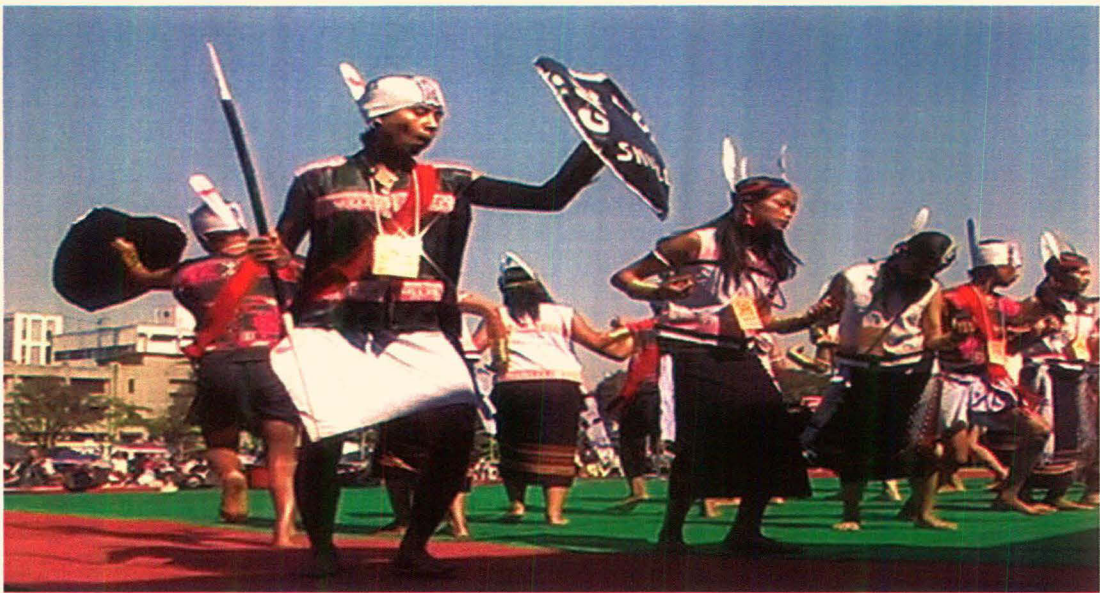
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KUT - HARVESTING FESTIVAL

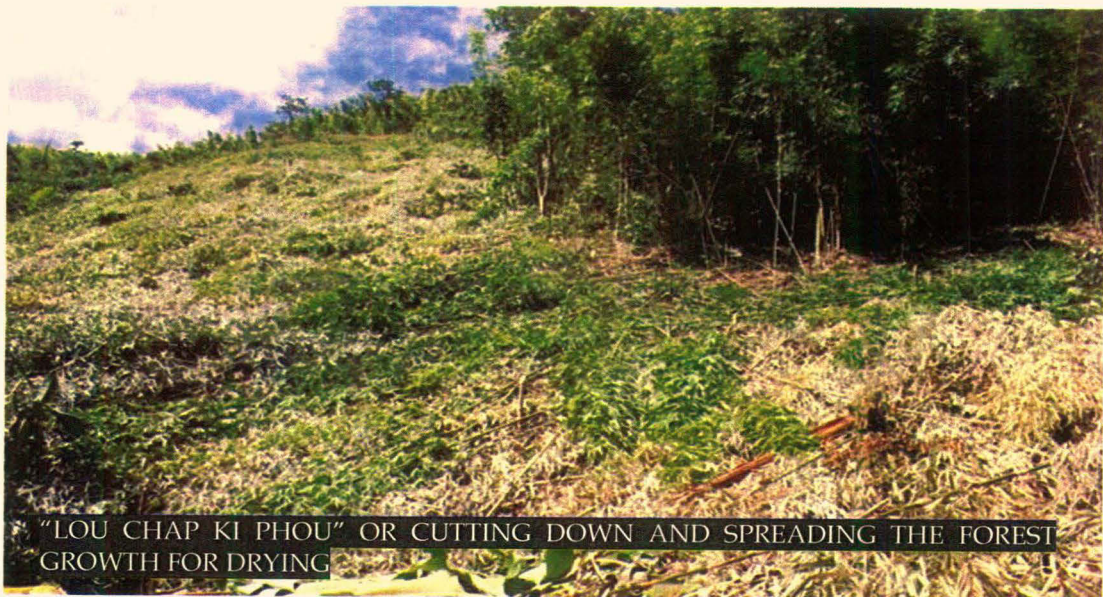


LADIES DANCING TO WELCOME THE AUTUMN

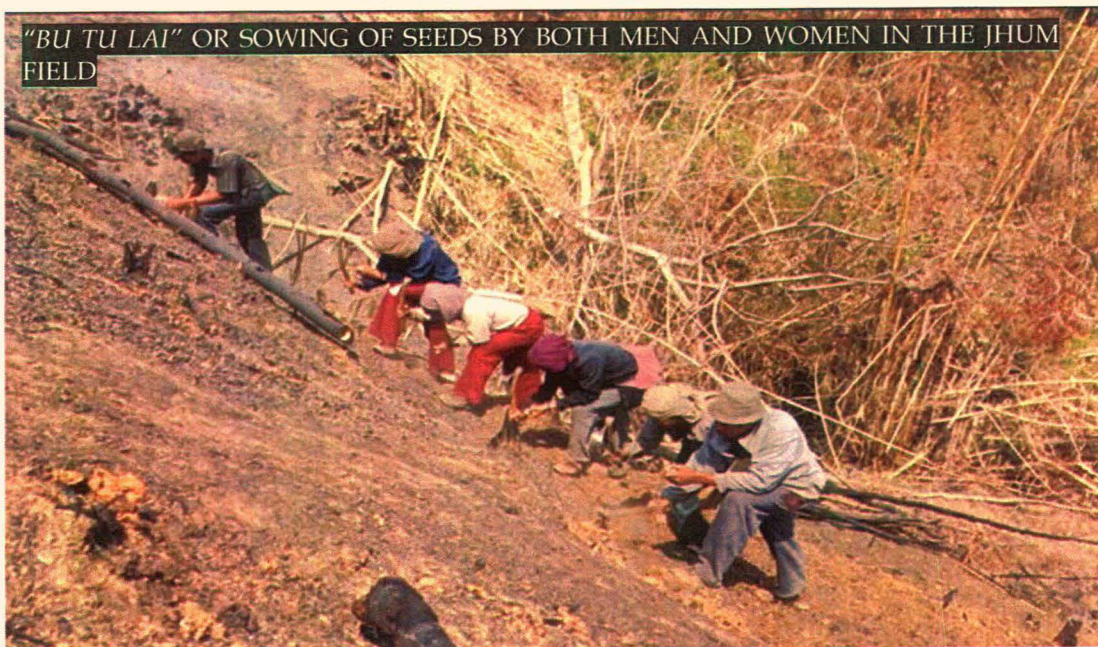


THADOU (KUKI) MEN BEATING A GONG DURING THE DANCE PERFORMANCE

JHUMMING / SHIFTING CULTIVATION



"LOU CHAP KI PHOU" OR CUTTING DOWN AND SPREADING THE FOREST GROWTH FOR DRYING

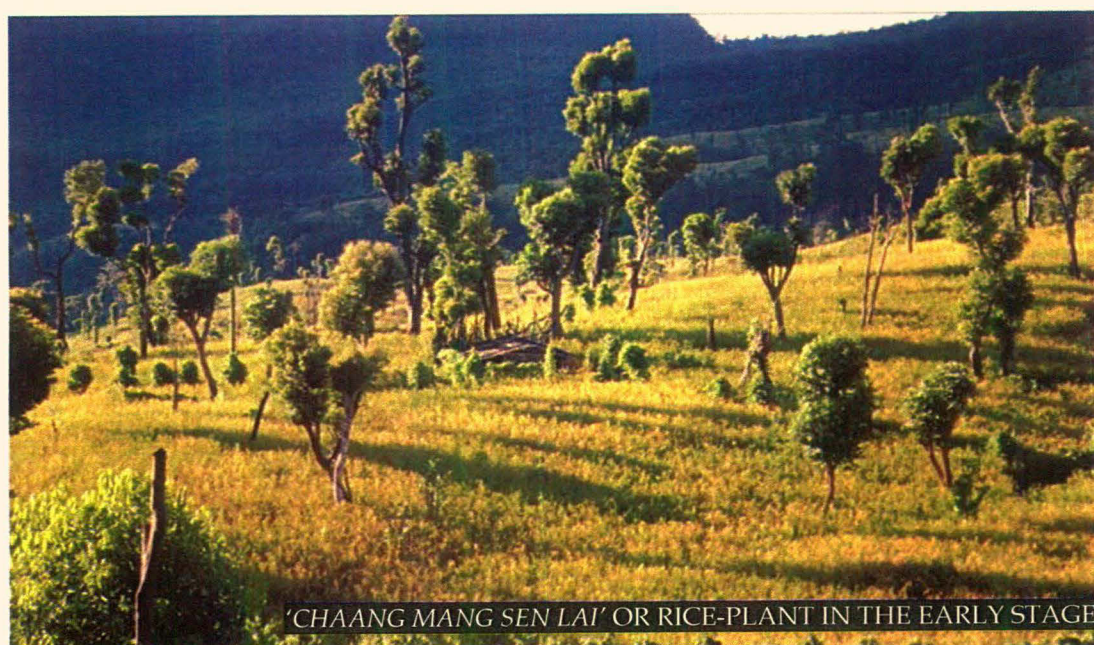




WOMEN FOLK WORKING IN THE FIELD



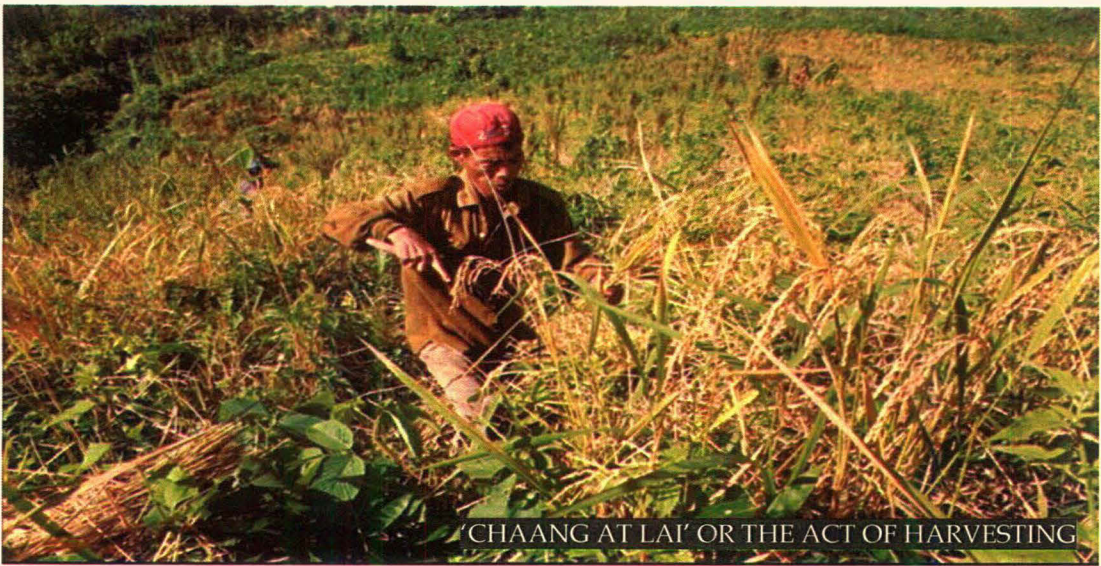
'CHANG HAM LHO' OR WEEDING



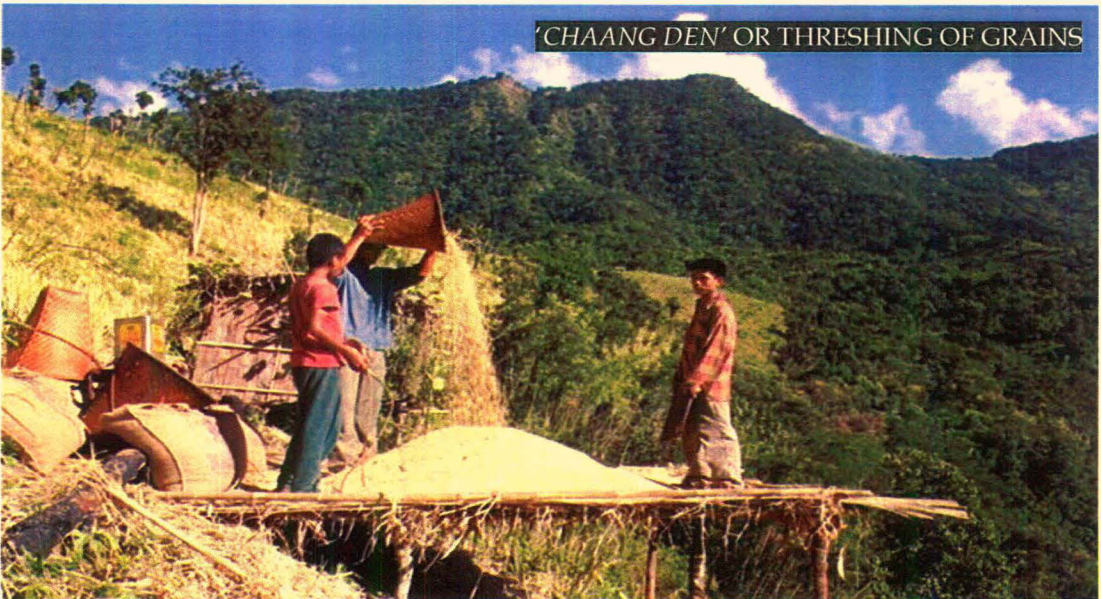
'CHAANG MANG SEN LAI' OR RICE-PLANT IN THE EARLY STAGE



THE RICE PLANT READY TO BE HARVESTED



'CHAANG AT LAI' OR THE ACT OF HARVESTING



'CHAANG DEN' OR THRESHING OF GRAINS

SOME OF THE INFORMANTS INTERVIEWED



MRS. KONKHOCHONG KIPGEN –
CHIEF OF TUJANG VAICHONG VILLAGE



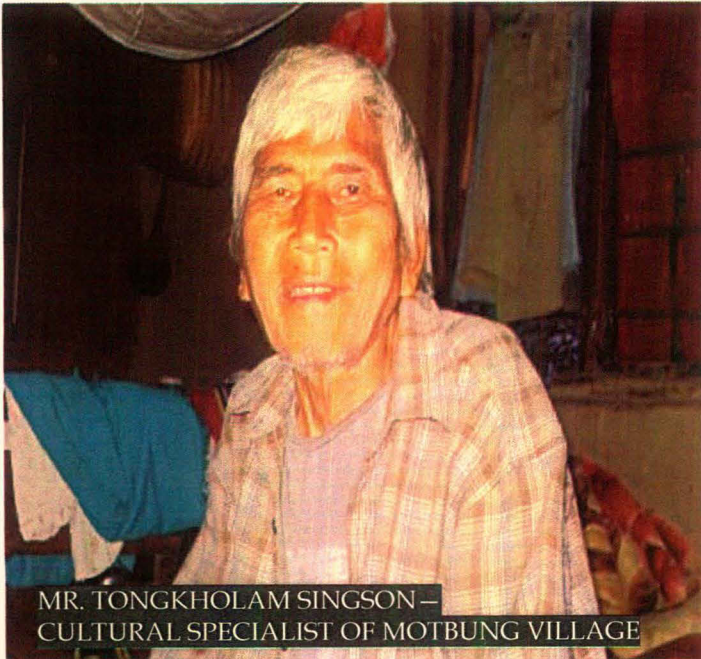
MRS. L. KAIKHOSEI –
CHIEF OF MOTBUNG VILLAGE



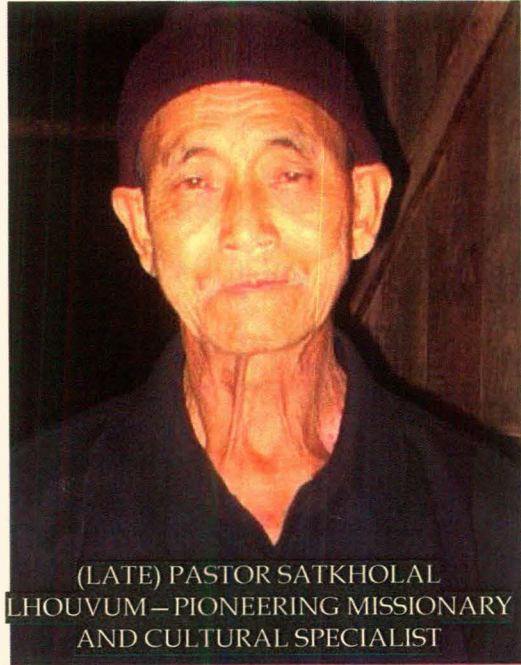
MR. KAILAL LHOUVUM – CULTURAL SPECIALIST
(MOTBUNG VILLAGE)



MR. THANGKAM MISAO, GENERAL SECRETARY OF SADAR HILLS
DISTRICT DEMAND COMMITTEE



MR. TONGKHOLAM SINGSON –
CULTURAL SPECIALIST OF MOTBUNG VILLAGE



(LATE) PASTOR SATKHOLAL
LHOUVUM – PIONEERING MISSIONARY
AND CULTURAL SPECIALIST



MRS. S.H. NEITHEM – CHAIRPERSON,
WOMEN SOCIETY OF MOTBUNG BAPTIST CHURCH



TWO LADY INFORMANT FROM MOTBUNG VILLAGE



AN INFORMANT FROM MOTBUNG VILLAGE



MR. HELTHANG KILONG – CULTURAL SPECIALIST FROM MOTBUNG VILLAGE



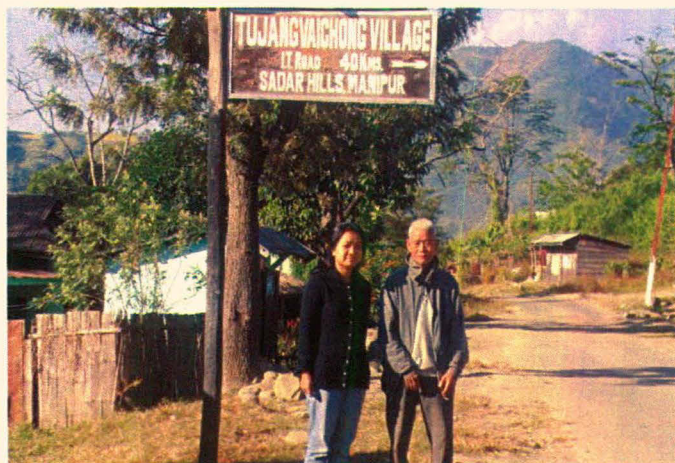
S.L. VUMKHOPAO – JOINT SECRETARY, MOTBUNG SEMANG-PACHONG VILLAGE AUTHORITY



MRS. NEIKIM – INFORMANT OF MOTBUNG VILLAGE



MR. LETPAO LHOUVUM – CULTURAL SPECIALIST OF MOTBUNG VILLAGE



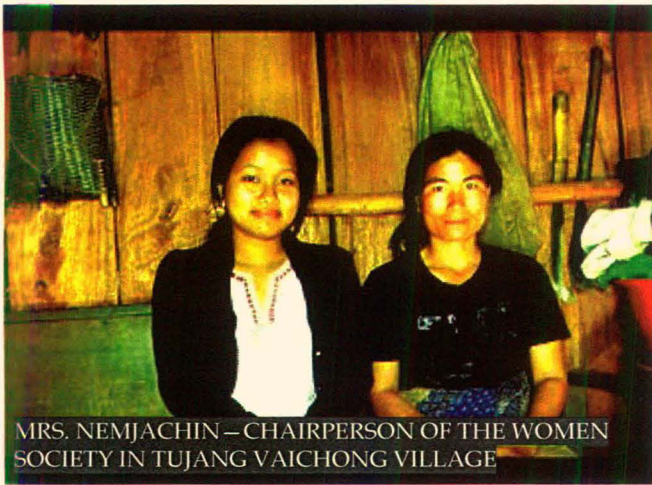
MR. LALKHOLUN SITLHOU – INFORMANT FROM TUJANG VAICHONG VILLAGE



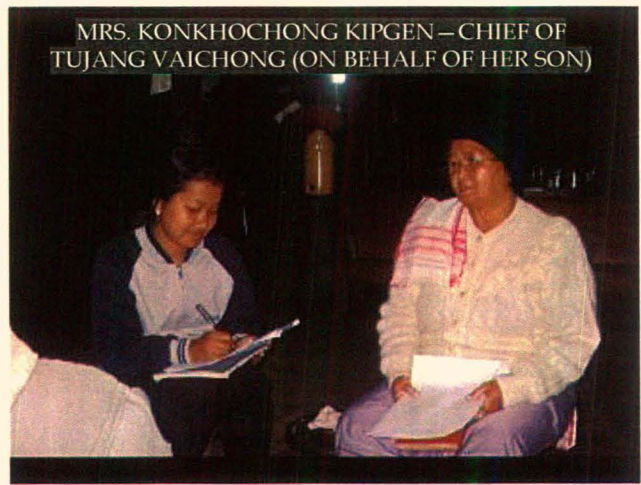
AN AGRICULTURAL LABOURER
FROM TUJANG VAICHONG VILLAGE



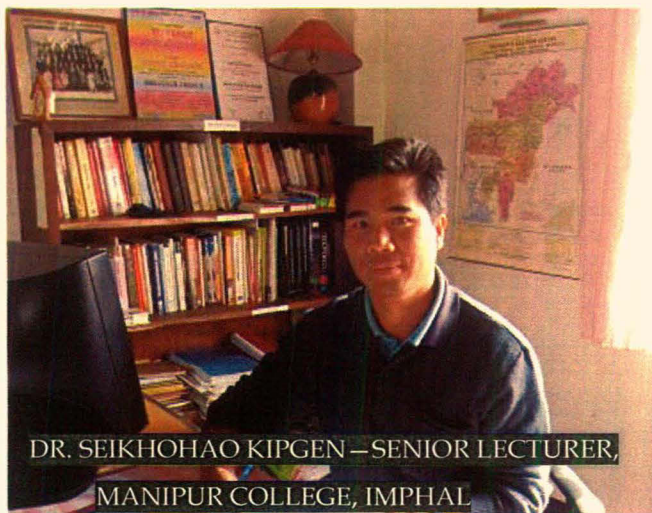
A LADY INFORMANT OF TUJANG VAICHONG VILLAGE
(BACK FROM THE JHUM FIELD)



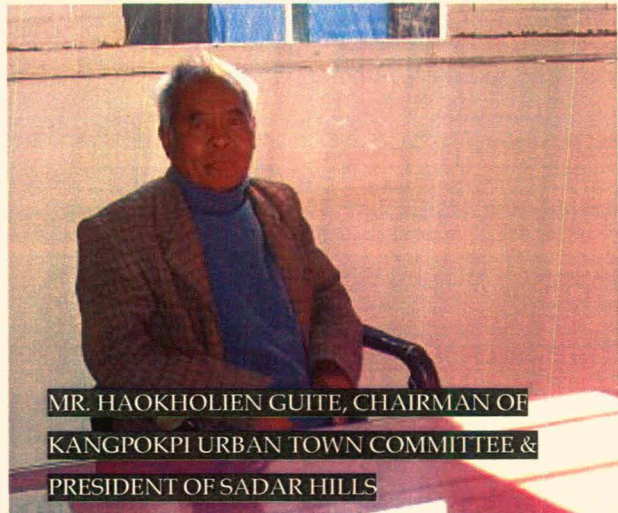
MRS. NEMJACHIN – CHAIRPERSON OF THE WOMEN
SOCIETY IN TUJANG VAICHONG VILLAGE



MRS. KONKHOCHONG KIPGEN – CHIEF OF
TUJANG VAICHONG (ON BEHALF OF HER SON)



DR. SEIKHOHAO KIPGEN – SENIOR LECTURER,
MANIPUR COLLEGE, IMPHAL



MR. HAOKHOLIEN GUTE, CHAIRMAN OF
KANGPOKPI URBAN TOWN COMMITTEE &
PRESIDENT OF SADAR HILLS

TUJANG VAICHONG VILLAGE



VILLAGE LANDSCAPE OF TUJANG VAICHONG VILLAGE

THE CHIEF TAKING A STROLL IN THE VILLAGE



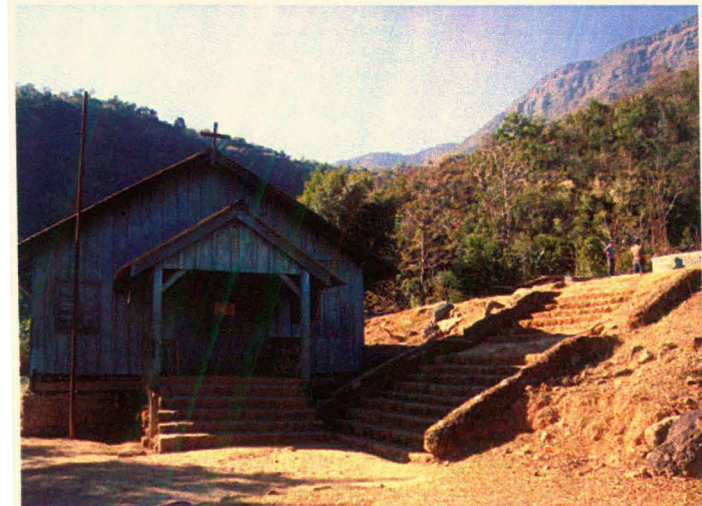
VILLAGE CHILDREN PLAYING



AN OLD LADY COMING BACK FROM THE FIELD



SEEDS PRESERVED OVER THE HEARTH BY WOMEN



KUKI BAPTIST CONVENTION –
THE FIRST KUKI CHURCH BUILT IN 1916



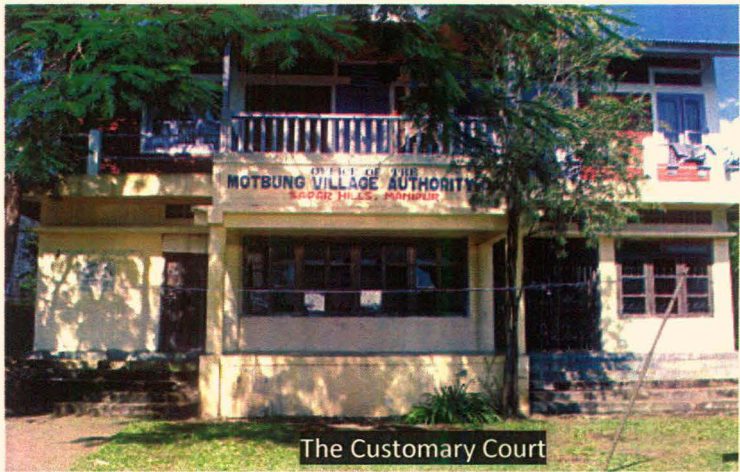
THE CHIEF WITH HER COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

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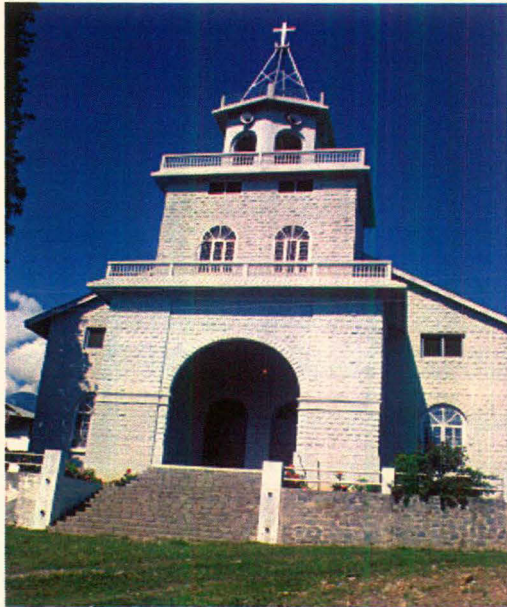
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S.L. KAIKHOSEI - CHIEF OF MOTBUNG VILLAGE AND HIS FAMILY



The Customary Court



THE MOTBUNG BAPTIST CHURCH BUILT IN 1944



THE VILLAGE AUTHORITY LEADERS



FOREST OFFICE IN MOTBUNG VILLAGE



A NEPALI BOY HERDING COWS IN MOTBUNG VILLAGE



'LHUNGJANG' LOCALITY WHICH IS GIVEN TO REFUGEES OF THE KUKI-NAGA CONFLICT



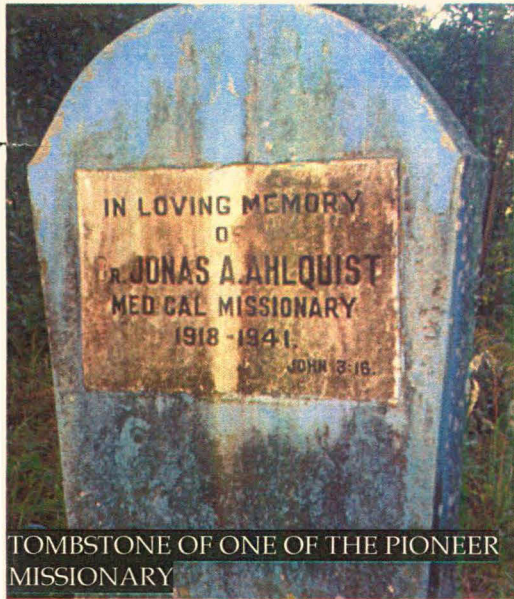
KANGPOKPI



THE CHAIRMAN OF THE KANGPOKPI URBAN TOWN COMMITTEE WHEN I FIRST INTERVIEW HIM IN 2008



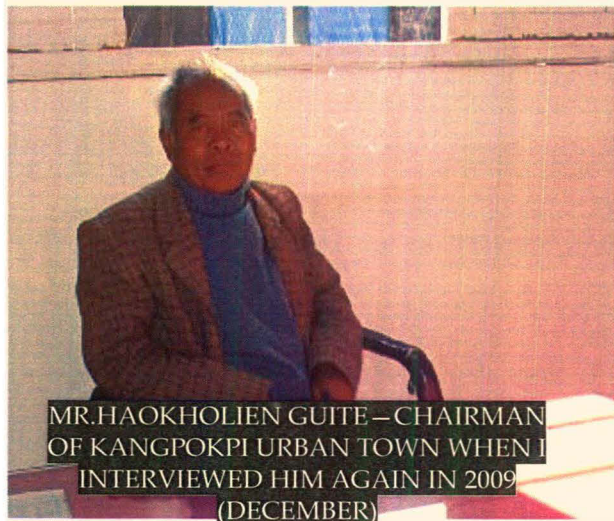
THE KANGPOKPI MISSION HOSPITAL BUILT WITH THE INNITIATIVE OF THE EARLY MISSIONARIES



TOMBSTONE OF ONE OF THE PIONEER MISSIONARY



A NEPALI LOCALITY IN KANGPOKPI VILLAGE

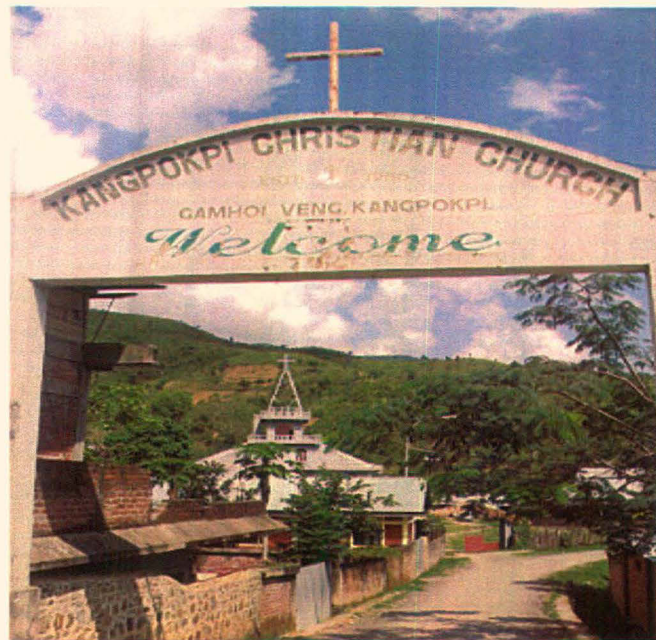


MR. HAOKHOLIEN GITE – CHAIRMAN OF KANGPOKPI URBAN TOWN WHEN I INTERVIEWED HIM AGAIN IN 2009 (DECEMBER)





T. KHOLIEN MOUL—A MOUNTAIN IN NEIGHBOURING NAGA VILLAGE LEASED OUT TO THE KANGPOKPI PEOPLE FOR JHÜMMING



KANGPOKPI CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Part I
Household Profile

- 1 . Name of the respondent.....
- 2 . Gender..... Age..... Marital Status.....
- 3 . Tribe..... Clan.....
- 4 . Name of Village.....
- 5 . Period of Residence
(a) 0-2 years (b) 3-5 years (c) 6-10 years (d) More than 10 years
- 6 . Religion.....
a) Christian
b) Hindu
c) Muslims
d) Others
- 7 . Denomination and Church.....
- 8 . Nature of the family.....
a) Nuclear
b) Joint
c) Female-headed
d) Others
- 9 . Size of the family.....
- 10 . Details of family members—

Name of Family Members	Sex	Age	Educational Qualification	Occupation*	Marital Status	Member of Organization/ Association

*Occupation: (a) Government Employee (b) Private Employment (c) Land related employment (d) unemployed

- 11 . Occupation.....
a) Government jobs
b) Private jobs (including NGOs)
c) Primarily agricultural labourers or cultivators
d) Landlord
e) Both government job and agricultural labourer
f) Others
12. Monthly Family Income (In Rs.):
a) Below 3750
b) 3750-7500
c) 7501-10,000
d) 10,001-15,000
e) Above 15,000

13. Assets owned by the Family:

Land	Vehicle	House	Others

14. Number of dependent.....
15. Education/ Educational Qualification.....
16. Size of land holding.....
17. Types of transfer of land holdings (the mode in which the person has come to own the land).....
 - a) Land sales and purchase
 - b) The process of inheritance and partition
 - c) Gift
 - d) Communally owned
 - e) Allotted by the state
 - f) Allotted by the chief
18. Categorisation of respondent based on the proportion of land owned.....
 - a) Marginal
 - b) Small
 - c) Semi medium
 - d) Medium
 - e) Large
 - f) Others

Part II

(For respondent who are farmers or involved in agriculture related activities)

1. What type of farming do you practice?
 - i. Joulei/ cultivation in the hills or Jhumming
 - ii. Phailei/ cultivation in the plains
 - iii. Others
2. Do you work on your own farm or as an agricultural labourer on other farms?
3. If you are working on others farm, what is the type of tenancy practice?
 - i. Loushan
 - ii. Tangkhai Chabi
 - iii. Others
4. How do you made boundaries to mark out your land area?
5. What is the mode of leasing out of land?
6. Labour
 - i. On what basis are the selection made when a landowner recruit labourers?
 - ii. Who among the family member work in the agricultural field?
 - iii. Is it a social arrangement?
 - iv. Types of labourers
 - v. Mode of payment
7. Land based conflict
 - i. To whom do you go for settlement of dispute over land?
 - ii. On what basis is the settlement of disputes over land made?
 - i. Laws of the community Versus State Government
 - ii. Communal Rights Versus State Laws
8. Is this property owned jointly or is in your name?
9. What is the proof of this ownership?
10. Who takes decision regarding land and under whose name is this land recorded?
11. Do you pay any land revenue?
12. Do you pay any form of tribute to the Chief?
13. What do you do on the land?
 - i. Jhumming
 - ii. Terrace cultivation

- iii. Horticulture
- iv. Livestock
- v. Others

i. If Jhumming, since how long have you been engaged in it? What are the crops that you grow?

14. Do you feel that Jhumming is productive? Are you able to meet your basic needs from it?
15. What is the agricultural cycle or cropping patterns? Do you maintained/ have agricultural calendar of cropping? Yes/No
- i. If yes, what are they?
16. What technology do you use for farming? Is it traditional or scientific methods of farming?
- i. If traditional, since how long are the methods been used/ practised?
 - ii. If scientific, what modern inputs-tools, implements, fertilizers, pesticides, seeds do you use and how productive is it?
17. In a family land transmission, who is the potential or likely heir or inheritor?
18. What is the co-relation between changes from joint or extended families to nuclear and single unit families today to the changes in the structure of land and land rights?
19. Categorisation of respondent in terms of ownership of land--
- i. Landlord
 - ii. Landless Labourers
 - iii. Cultivating their own land and
 - iv. Others
20. Comment on the Lom system in your village. How does it operate? How many forms are there? Name them. Are you a member of any one of them? Specify.
21. Which category of people may be categorised as landless labourers?
22. What are the types of land alienation found?
- a. Banda
 - b. Contract basis of leasing out land
 - c. Who lends out money?
 - i. Landlord
 - ii. Village chief
 - iii. Money lender
23. Does patta land or patta system exist in the village?
24. Privatization of Land holdings
25. Forms and rate of taxes
- a. House tax
 - b. Land tax
 - c. Tax paid to Government and that paid to the Chief.

(Sample)
Interview Questions (Chief)

1. Name
2. Tribe and Clan
3. What is the approximate area size of Tujang Waichong/ Motbung? How much of it is under Forest and Homestead Settlement area?
4. What is the size of the chief's own holding?
5. How did Tujang Waichong/ Motbung derive its name?
6. How do you exercise your rights of authority? Do you do it in consultation with the village elders or members of the village authority?
7. Is the position of chieftainship preserve through the system of direct descent? Yes/No
8. If yes, how many generations in your lineage line have been bestowed this position? Who was the first in line and which year did he rule as chief?
9. What are the land laws in your village—both compulsory and optional ones? Are they unique to your village?
10. What are the core areas of land laws dealt with by the Chiefs and those dealt by the Village authority?
11. What is the law regarding the leasing or selling out of land to non-tribal or neighbouring villagers? Is it mandatory to get the permission of the chief? What are the main prohibitions and laws regarding the sale and purchase of land?
12. What types of land demarcation or division are there in Tujang Waichong/ Motbung?
 - a. Village land
 - b. Community land
 - c. Chief's land
 - d. Forest area
 - i. Open reserved area
 - ii. Protected area
 - e. The village homestead –
 - i. individual land with proper patta system
 - ii. individual land allotted by the chief without patta system

Others
13. What are the settlement laws regarding those who are residing in the homestead area?
14. Comment on the other villages (emerging towns) where chieftainship system has been replaced by the election based Chairmanship system.
15. What are the lands laws regarding the use of forestland by the villagers?
16. Are the villagers' allowed to access forestland? Do they have rights over NTFP and timber in these forests?
17. Was this forestland under community control in the past?
18. Who has the maximum rights over the forestland?
 - a. The Government/Forest Officials
 - b. The Village Chief
 - c. The Community or Villagers
- Comment
19. How has the government forest policies affected or the village? What are the changes brought about by the government policies on forest area?
20. How do you choose or allot land to the villager?
21. What are the common disputes regarding land in the villages?

22. Land based conflict
 - a. Who presided over it and how they dealt with it? Is it the community leaders or the state officials?
 - b. On what basis is the settlement of disputes made?
 - i. Laws of the community Versus State Government
 - ii. Communal Rights Versus State Laws
23. Do the villagers still pay tribute to you in any form like in the past?
24. In the past, how does the chief allot land? How is this different today?
25. Comment on the changing nature of the authority enjoyed by the chief as compared to the past.
26. Comment on the payment of Hill House Tax.
27. Section 158 of the MLR and LR Act, 1960 state that there would be no transfer of land by a person who is a member of STs to a Non-Tribal, comment on the recent debate on this issue.
28. Comment on the concept of Land Alienation in the context of Tujang Waichong/ Motbung village.
29. Does patta land or patta system exist in the village?
30. Comment on the emerging trend of privatization of Land holdings. How have it influenced the village structure or the villagers (on the question of the Chief's hold over the land)?
31. Forms and rate of taxes
 - a. House tax
 - b. Land tax
 - c. Tax paid to Government and that paid to the Chief.
32. Comment on the Lom system in your village. How does it operate? How many forms are there? Name them. Are you a member of any one of them? Specify.

(Sample)

Interview Questions (Village Authority)

1. Name
2. Tribe and Clan
3. Position/ Post
4. What is the approximate area size of Tujang Waichong/ Motbung? How much of it is under Forest and Homestead Settlement area?
5. What is the size of the chief' own holding?
6. How did Tujang Waichong/ Motbung derive its name?
7. How are the members of the Village Authority elected? What criterion or what qualification enables them to be elected for such a post? Is the membership voluntary? How often do they meet?
8. What kinds of issues does the committee deal with? What are the issues that are at the exclusive jurisdiction of the Village Authority? What are the core areas of land laws dealt with by the Chiefs and those dealt by the Village Authority?
9. Can you narrate an incident in which land based conflict was resolved by the council consisting of both the Chiefs and members of the village authority
10. How do you exercise your rights of authority as member of the village authority? Do you do it in consultation with the chief or village elders?
11. What are the land laws in your village – both compulsory and optional ones? Are they unique to your village?
12. What are the core areas of land laws dealt with by the Chiefs and those dealt by the Village authority?

13. What is the law regarding the leasing or selling out of land to non-tribal or neighbouring villagers? Is it mandatory to get the permission of the chief? What are the main prohibitions and laws regarding the sale and purchase of land?
14. What types of land demarcation or division are there in Tujang Waichong/ Motbung?
 - a. Village land
 - b. Community land
 - c. Chief's land
 - d. Forest area
 - i. Open reserved area
 - ii. Protected area
 - e. The village homestead –
 - i. individual land with proper patta system
 - ii. individual land allotted by the chief without patta system

Others

15. What are the settlement laws regarding those who are residing in the homestead area?
16. Comment on the other villages (emerging towns) where chieftainship system has been replaced by the village council system.
17. What are the lands laws regarding the use of forestland by the villagers?
18. Are the villagers' allowed to access forestland? Do they have rights over NTFP and timber in these forests?
19. Was this forestland under community control in the past?
20. Who has the maximum rights over the forestland?
 - a. The Government/Forest Officials
 - b. The Village Chief
 - c. The Community or Villagers

Comment

21. How has the government forest policies affected or the village? What are the changes brought about by the government policies on forest area?
22. How do you choose or allot land to the villager?
23. What are the common disputes regarding land in the villages?
24. Land based conflict
 - a. Who presided over it and how they dealt with it? Is it the community leaders or the state officials?
 - b. On what basis is the settlement of disputes made?
 - i. Laws of the community Versus State Government
 - ii. Communal Rights Versus State Laws
25. Comment on the changing nature of the authority enjoyed by the chief as compared to the past.
26. Comment on the payment of Hill House Tax.
27. Section 158 of the MLR and LR Act, 1960 state that there would be no transfer of land by a person who is a member of STs to a Non-Tribal, comment on the recent debate on this issue.
28. Comment on the concept of Land Alienation in the context of Tujang Waichong/ Motbung village.
29. Does patta land or patta system exist in the village?
30. Comment on the emerging trend of privatization of Land holdings. How have it influenced the village structure or the villagers (on the question of the Chief's hold over the land)?
31. Form of or rate of taxes
 - a. House tax
 - b. Land tax
 - c. Tax paid to Government and that paid to the Chief.
32. Comment on the Lom system in your village. How does it operate? How many forms are there? Name them. Are you a member of any one of them? Specify.

Women Organisation

1. How many types of women organisations are there in Kangpokpi/ Motbung/ Tujang Vaichong in both secular and religious settings?
2. Name the women leaders (Church or Society).
3. On what basis were they elected? How long is the duration of their leadership? What are the objectives of the organisation?
4. Do they have any influence in the authority structure of the Customary Law Court of Motbung and Tujang Vaichong or in the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee? Does the village council invite women to participate in its proceedings?
5. Comment on the issue of inheritance (esp. ancestral land) rights for women of the family.
 - a. Are lands recorded in women's name?
 - b. Can women inherit parental land? Are women allowed to participate and receive their share in the domestic distribution of land?
 - c. Are there provisions for single child girls to inherit ancestral land?
6. Comment on women's contribution to the economy of the family.
 - a. What is women's role and contribution in agriculture?
 - b. What is their main role in the process of Jhumming and wet-rice cultivation?
 - c. Does the white collared jobs and education changes the status of women? Do women have a voice in land related issues?

Cultural Specialists or the Aged-group

Unstructured interview was conducted on the cultural specialists and the aged population. The respondents were made to narrate on the following subjects--

1. Traditional Land System of the Thadou-Kuki Society
2. The various land related rites and rituals and their significance
3. Changes brought about by various external agencies like the entry of the Colonial administrator and Missionaries or the various land reforms of Independent India, narratives on land based conflicts in the past
4. Changes in agriculture pattern or practices--Land tenure, labour arrangement, choosing a site, Jhumming to settled agriculture, and building or choosing of site for location, land distribution, settlement, land use etc.
5. The Chieftainship System
6. Man-land relationship
7. Communal ownership of land
8. Festival celebrated in relation to land and agriculture like the KUT or harvesting festival
9. Formation of new villages – rites and rituals, one address to the chief of the old village and the other to the gods

Question for leaders of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee

1. With the increasing population in Kangpokpi over the years, Can Kangpokpi be categorised as a town? What would be the appropriate term for Kangpokpi?
2. How many members are there in the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee? How long is the term of office?
3. How are the members of the KUTC elected? What criterion or what qualification enables them to be elected for such a post. Is the membership voluntary? How often do they meet?
4. What kinds of issues does the committee deal with? What are the issues that are at the exclusive jurisdiction of the KUTC?
5. Does the Chieftainship still exist in name? What is the status of the Chief? When was the Chieftainship System replaced by the KUTC?

6. What are the land laws in Kangpokpi—both compulsory and optional ones? (include the business related to taking soil, stones from the river beds and collecting woods and timbers from forest)
7. What are the laws regarding the leasing or selling out of land to non-tribals or neighbouring villagers? Is it mandatory to get the permission of the customary court of the KUTC? Which authority can issue or prohibit such transaction? What are the main prohibitions and laws regarding the sale and purchase of land?
8. Comment on the payment of Hill House Tax. Who collect it? What are the forms of fund collected by the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee?
9. Which one is a better system of village administration: hereditary Chieftainship System or the elected system of the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee?
10. Comment on the Lom system in your area. How does it operate? How many forms are there? Name them. Are you a member of any one of them? Specify.

