

### **Chapter: III**

#### **PROFILE OF THADOU**

In previous chapter, I elaborated framework of study and drawn conclusion that micro community study of Thadou becomes inevitable to develop adequate understanding about tribe. As part of this, the present chapter tries to uncover history and origin of the tribe Thadou, its migration and settlement and social structure primarily based on multiplicity of data.

#### **Origin of Thadou**

Origin of the Thadou-Kukis embedded in oral tradition, myth and belief. Almost all of Kuki- Chin tribes promulgate similar but slightly different version of their origin. As such, several theories put forward about their origin in different way and manner. With regard to Thadou-Kuki, the *Khul* theory is most widely accepted one among the Thadou community.

The earliest account of Thadou-Kuki origin from *Khul* is recorded by late colonel McCulloch (1859) in his *An Account of the Valley of Manipore and of the Hill Tribes* where he contends:

The Khongjai\* brings their progenitors from *bowels of the earth*, and they relate manner of reaching its surface. One day their king's brother was hunting hedgehog, when his dog in pursuit of one entered *a cavern*, and he waited its return, remained at mouth of *the cave*. After lapse of sometime dog having not returned, its master 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 *surface of the earth*. Scene presented to his view both please and astonished him. Returning to his brother he related his adventure, and counseled him to ascend with all villagers to new country to which the king agreed.<sup>1</sup>

The same folk of their origin is also noted by William Shaw (1929) after seventy year of publication of McCulloch's work:

The Kuki used to live *under earth*, or rather *inside it*. *Noimangpa* was chief of this *subterranean region*. Once *Chongthu*, a relative of *Noimangpa* went hunting porcupines in jungle with his dog and discovered a *large hole*. He perceived through this that *upper earth* was uninhabited and there was a great darkness. This darkness last for seven day and seven nights is called *Thimzin* by Thadou. *Chongthu* so rejoiced at discovery that the person gave up his hunt and went back to his house. He conjured up forming a village of his own on earth and planed accordingly. Just then, *Noimangpa*, chief of *under-world* was performing *Chon* festival which everyone attended including *Chongja*, elder brother of *Chongthu*. *Noimangpa's* son *Chonkim* was also present. During this feast *Chongthu* started waving his sharp sword about so vigorously to injure some folk present, at which all became angered. *Chongthu's* such action was premeditated as he thought by doing so he would be turn out from under-world and he would form a village of his own. News of *Chongthu's* behaviour became known to *Noimangpa* who said 'Chongthu better lived in Heaven' meaning thereby that he had better be killed.

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<sup>1</sup> W. McCulloch. 1980/1859. 'An Account of the Valley of Manipore and of the Hill Tribes'. Delhi: Mittal Publication, p. 55. *Emphasis added*.

\*The word *Khongjais* here is used by McCulloch to refer to the Kukis of Manipur.

Chongthu hearing of Noimangpa's wrath at once prepared to migrate out of hole in earth which he saw and which is spoken of as *Khul* by Thadou. So Chongja and Chongthu killed many pigs, fowls etc. and feasted in preparation for their departure.<sup>2</sup>

Shaw further relates that somehow Chongja's party was delayed for migration but Chongthu's party moved off followed by Chongthu himself. On reaching *Khul* the leaders found that a great snake called *Gullheipi* was in possession of it and when they made endeavour to pass it the snake killed them with its tail. Chongthu on reaching the spot was not to be thwarted in his ambitions so he tied his cloth around him and placed a *Phoipi*, a thick cotton cloth, over his head and so attacked the great snake which was preventing their passage. He used sword called *Joudichem* in this attack. After hour of fighting, he was victorious and finally managed to kill snake which he cut into seven pieces. At the same time, a *Lhoh*, a lion, also attempted to retard Chongthu's egress but he persuaded the animal to let him pass by saying "are you not created by the *Pathen* (creator) as the king of the animals? If so, I have been created as king of men by *Pathen* too and therefore we should be friends instead of enemies". The lion agreed and let them pass. The opening of *Khul* was covered with a stone and one of Chongthu's parties called *Vanlalpa* lifted it up. However, he could not lift it for long and only seven persons were able to get out. Then the stone was dropped and all further attempts to raise it were in vain. The seven persons who emerged were *Chongthu*, *Vanlalpa*, the stone lifter, *Khupngam*, the keeper of the dog and four others. The names of the other four are not known but are said to include the progenitors of the Manipuri, the Naga, the foreigner

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<sup>2</sup> William Shaw. 1929. 'Notes on the Thadou Kukis'. Government Press, pp. 24-26.

and the Burmese. However, they are not definite about the last two although they are quite emphatic about the number of people who got out being seven.<sup>3</sup>

Shaw also continue to note that Chongja' s party, following on, found the stone blocking their passage out and after making many attempts gave up and returned to Noimangpa reporting the result. *Nemneh*, wife of Chongja, cursed Chongthu and his party before they left the Khul saying that they should suffer from all kinds of sicknesses, deaths, troubles, evil spirits and bad luck. These cursing were heard by Chongthu's party and they made sacrifices in an endeavour to avoid curse which Thadou say still rests on them. So, in case of serious illness, etc., sacrifices are always made in name of *Nemneh*, wife of Chongja, in hopes of appeasing her wrath. When such sacrifices are made *thempu*, i. e., the medicine man or soothsayer, always repeats name of seven of the most important villages of Noimangpa under earth in one of which *Nemneh* is sure to be at time, so that she may hear his solicitation. Name of those vilages are: *Noimang*, *Kholoichal*, *Khopalva*, *Khothip*, *Khomang*, *khokanglai* and *Khokisupi*. He goes on to say that on reaching upper earth Chongthu, in his wandering, found two persons called *Lenthang* and *Lunkim* who survived thimzin by making a fire of skull and bone of game they killed as they were hunters. These two were captured by Chongthu and used as guide during his exploration of new world.<sup>4</sup> To location of Khul William Shaw opines that it is at source of *Gun* river which, according to him, is identical with Imphal river in Manipur state.<sup>5</sup>

However, colonial notion of Khul and Noimang as 'cave', 'underworld', 'subterranean region', 'bowel of earth', 'upper earth', or 'surface of earth' is disputed by many

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<sup>3</sup> Shaw. 'Notes on the Thadou Kukis', p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Shaw. 'Notes on the Thadou Kukis', p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Shaw. 'Notes on the Thadou Kukis', p. 26.

scholars. K. Zawla (1976), a Mizo historian, believe that Khul as a place to be somewhere in China.<sup>6</sup> His view is also shared by Khaikhotinthang Kipgen (1982) who contends Khul refers to a passage in Great Wall of China. Again some other put forward their argument in support of Khul; to be gate of a fort.<sup>7</sup> While others like Singkhawkhai (1984) and Chawn Kio believe it to be in Tibet, while still other believe it to be in Chindwin Valley since literal meaning of Chindwin is ‘cave or hole of Chin’.<sup>8</sup> Jangkhomang Guite is of view that Khul refers to passage through which Kuki came out from Noimang to Chunggam and felt that original home of Kuki was Noimang not Khul. He further explains Khul is not a ‘cave’ but passage through which they came from. The idea of ‘cave’ came through complex translation-transliteration process during colonial period which was dominated by dominant civilisational narrative of ‘tribes’.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Noimang was, for instance, variously translated as ‘underworld’, ‘subterranean region’, ‘bowel of earth’; Khul was also defined as ‘a cavern’ or ‘a large hole’; and Chunggam was translated as ‘upper world’, ‘upper earth’, ‘surface of earth’ as if people live below surface.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Lian H. Sakhong. 2003. ‘In Search of Chin Identity: A Study in Religion, Politics and Ethnic Identity in Burma’. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Khaikhotinthang Kipgen. 1982. ‘The Thadou Kukis: A Brief Account of History and Culture’. Self-Publication, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Sakhong. ‘In Search of Chin Identity’, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Jangkhomang Guite. 2012. ‘Memories of Origin and Migration: From Noimang to the Chin Hills’, [www.jneis.com](http://www.jneis.com) (accessed on 6<sup>TH</sup> August 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Guite, ‘Memories of Origin and Migration’.

## Migration and Settlement

With regard to general population movement of Tibeto-Burman (Mongoloid), scholars speculate central China to be place from where initial migration began.<sup>11</sup> G. A. Grierson (1967) contends Mongoloid race who now occupies south- east Asia and also northeast India, where Tibeto-Burman are regarded a race, had their early home in north western China lying between upper course of Yang-Tse and Huang- ho.<sup>12</sup> Further study, undertaken by a team of linguists on philology of Tibeto- Burman race, Grierson comments ‘further India and Assam were populated by successive wave of Tibet- Chinese invaders, each advancing in turn down course of one or more principal stream, the Brahmaputra, the Chinwin, the Irrawadi, the Salween, the Menam and the Mekong and driving its predecessors nearer to sea-coasts, or into mountain fastness which overlook valley’.<sup>13</sup>

C.C. Lewis (1945) claims Tibeto- Burman came to Burma following two separate routes. Western route took of Chindwin and eastern route took Mekhong-Salween-NmaiHka path. Western Tibeto-Burman group included Myanmarese who settled in valley of Irrawaddy and Chindwin i.e. Mrus and LashisHka, and Lisaws, whereas Lahu and Kaw settled in valley of Mekhong. Of western group, Kuki- Chin are supposed to have entered first into Burma and spread into upper Chindwin, Chin-Lushai hills down to Rakhine hills to south.<sup>14</sup> Singkhawkhai (1995) described the group who settled in south of upper Burma

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<sup>11</sup> Seikhohao Kipgen. 2005. ‘Political and economic History of the Kukis of Manipur’, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of History, Manipur University.

<sup>12</sup> G.A. Grierson. 1967/1908. ‘Linguistic Survey of India (Vol.III) Part 1’. Delhi: Motila Banarasidas, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Grierson. ‘Linguistic Survey of India’, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> C.C. Lewis. 1945. ‘The Tribes of Burma: Ethnological Survey of India’. Rangoon: Government Printing Press, p. 5.

as Old Kuki Chin.<sup>15</sup> However, people who belonged to same racial stock but moved into Burma in first century belong to second wave and who settled in north of Upper Burma are referred to as New Kuki Chin.<sup>16</sup>

As put forward by T.S. Gangte (2003), Tibeto-Burman group initially moved towards west and thereafter subdivided themselves into several groups. They followed different routes, one group reaching Tibet on north where some of them stayed behind, while others moved on northward until they reached Burma in three waves. These people were the Kuki- Chin and the Pyu- Burmese- Kachin groups. While the latter stuck to this place, the Kuki- Chin group moved further towards south-west following Irrawady and Chindwin rivers and continued to do so till they reached shore of Bay of Bengal. From here they turned back north and eventually fanned out along mountain down whole length and breadth of hilly region, on either side of existing Indo Burma boundary line.<sup>17</sup> G. H. Luce (1959) observed that Kuki- Chin historians and other local scholars are also convinced that among Tibeto- Burman, Kuki-Chin-Mizo in particular, made further advance and groups tracked into Burma through Hukwang valley, along Chindwin basin and Kabaw valley.<sup>18</sup>

To H. Dounge (1992) Kuki- Chin-Mizo groups entered Burma, through Hukawng valley along Chindwin basin and Kabaw valley, migrating until they reached Bay of Bengal and

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<sup>15</sup> Singkhawkhai. 1995. 'Zo People and their Culture'. Churachandpur, Manipur, India: Khampu Hatzaw, p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> Ngaknu Gangte. 2002. 'The Gangte Tribe: An Ethno- Historical Study', Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Department of Education, Manipur University, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> T.S. Gangte. 2003. 'The Kukis of Manipur: A Historical Analysis'. Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, p.18.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted by B. Lalthangliana. 1977. 'History of Mizo in Burma'. Aizawl: Zawlbuk Agencies, p. 89.

returned towards north.<sup>19</sup> Mayor Fortes also convincingly traces Chin migration to upper source of Chindwin and states that ‘Kuki race migrated from north to south down valley and then stopped by Bay of Bengal and turned again towards north.’<sup>20</sup>

Local historian K. Zawla (1964) claims date of migration of Kuki-Chin down to Burma began in 950 A.D.<sup>21</sup> According to G.H. Luce the most probable date for their arrival at Chindwin was middle of 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>22</sup> B. Lalthangliana (1977) also agreed 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to be possible date for their arrival to Chindwin valley.<sup>23</sup> F. K. Lehman (1980) assigns date very close to beginning of the Christian era.<sup>24</sup> Kuki began to settle in Chindwin valley probably sometimes in early Common Era (CE) but certainly before eight century. Some of them started migrating into hill around 9<sup>th</sup> century (after their ‘kingdom’ in Chindwin valley was destroyed by Man or Nanchao or Nanzhoou), but major migration took in about fourteenth century, in face of Burmese expansion.<sup>25</sup> Doungul Letkhojam Haokip (2006) agreed possible date of migration to be between 920- 950 AD.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> H. Doungel.1992. ‘Sociological Study of the Customary laws of the Kukis’. Unpublished M. Phil, Dissertation, Department of Education, Manipur University, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Shaw, ‘Notes on the Thadou Kukis’, p. 17.

<sup>21</sup> K. Zawla. 1964. ‘Mizo Pi PuteLehanThlahteChanchin- History of the descendents of Mizo ancestor’. Aizawl, Mizoram: Arsi Press, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> F.K. Lehman. 1980/1963. ‘The Structure of Chin Society: a tribal people of Burma adapted to a non- Western civilisation’. Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> B. Lalthangliana. 1977. ‘History of Mizo in Burma’. Aizawl: Zawlbuk Agencies, p. 71.

<sup>24</sup> Lehman. ‘The Structure of Chin Society’, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> Quote by Jangkhomang Guite. 2001. ‘Civilisation and its malcontents: The politics of Kuki raid in nineteenth century Northeast India’. The Indian Economic and Social History Review: Sage Publication, p.348.

<sup>26</sup> Doungul Letkhojam. 2006. ‘Historical Traditions and Customary Laws of the Chassad’, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of History, Manipur University, p. 17.



Many Chin language speakers including Naga, Proto-Meitei and Chin Kuki groups migrated from Kabaw valley into Manipur in different waves, either through Manipur river (Gun river) or across Tengnoupal hills.<sup>27</sup>

Mangkhosat Kipgen (1997) maintains that during historical course of their migration, some groups are believed to have separated from main group. While some section entered Manipur consisting of Anal, Lamkang, Purum, Maring, Chiru, Kom, Aimol, Chothe, Tarao etc. known by Meitei as Khongjais, another section proceeded further into Cachar and Tripura, while core group moved down to Chindwin.<sup>28</sup> He continues to relate that this core group further broke into several groups some of whom entered into Chin state whereas some other scattered as far as Chitagong hill tract and some others in plain of Sandoway district who later on became very much Brahmanised in religion, language and culture. Core group that moved eastwards reached Mandalay and settled side by side with Burmese, and from Mandalay they again moved out and settled at Khampat in Kabaw valley for centuries.<sup>29</sup> Further after their settlement in Khampat, some groups of Kuki-Chin ethnic family made their inroad into hill of Manipur through Chin Hill while majority groups moved to direction of southwest which later came to be known as Chin hill, who established their settlement at Tiddim, Falam, Haka and some other places. Some groups further moved down to Zotung, Matupi and Mara areas up to extent of extreme south of Lushai hills. And still parts of them consisting of Pautus, Hualngos,

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<sup>27</sup> Letkhojam. 'Historical Traditions and Customary Laws', p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, 1997. 'Christianity and Mizo Culture: The Encounter between Christianity and Mizo Culture in Mizoram'. Mizoram: Mizo Theological Conference. p. 38.

<sup>29</sup> Kipgen. 'Christianity and Mizo Culture', p. 39.

Khawlhings, Darlong, Hmars, Thadous, Gangtes and allied clans moved westward and made their settlement which later came to be known as Lushai hill.<sup>30</sup>

According to R. Thanhlira (1969) Kuki-Chin group belonging to Tibeto-Burman group of Mongoloid came from east though no definite date regarding their migration. General belief is, they pass through Himalayan mountain in their southward movement from China<sup>31</sup> and reached Tibet where they were subdivided into several groups and reached to Burma through Hukwang valley, along Chindwin and Kabaw valley and further migrated along Chindwin basin and Irrawady river till they reached Bay of Bengal and returned again towards north. After Thadou, who generally known as new Kuki, moved further westward and made their entry into Lushai hill. They however were driven out by Lushai in and around 18<sup>th</sup> century into Cachar district from where they made their inroad into Manipur.

Captain Pemberton (1835) remarks Khongjuees (khongsai), who under more generally known name of kookies (kukis), Koo-chung (khochung) and Kuci (kuki), stretch from southern border of Muneepoor (Manipur) valley to northern limit of province of Arakkacan,... that Kookies have gradually advanced for year in a northerly direction, and hitherto established themselves on range which are originally occupied by more northerly tribes or committed such fearful aggression upon latter, as to compel them to retire and leave an unoccupied tract between themselves and these formidable opponents.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Kipgen. 'Christianity and Mizo Culture', p. 41.

<sup>31</sup> R. Thanhlira. 1969. 'The Tribes of North Cachar Hills' in S. Barkati (ed.): 'Tribes of Assam'. New Delhi: National Book Trust, p. 72.

<sup>32</sup> R.B. Pemberton. 1835. 'Report on the Frontier of British India'. Govt. Press, p. 15.

Shaw (1929) contents that Kukis live in a large area of hilly country bounded by Angami Nagas of Naga hills district in north, the province of Burma in east, Chin hills and Lushai hills in south and district of Cachar in west. He continues that, they occupy hills of the state of Manipur on all sides of Imphal valley.<sup>33</sup> Meerwarh (1919) is also of the opinion that Kuki occupied hill range south of Naga hills. Their neighbours to north are Naga and Manipuri, to east tribes of upper Chindwin and Chin hill, on south those living on hill tract of Chittagong, and on west they are bounded by plain of Sylhet and hill of north Cachar.<sup>34</sup>

Grierson (1969) maintains Thadou who are also called new Kuki formerly lived in Lushai and Chin hill after expelling old Kuki Hrangkhoh and Biete tribe after which they (Thadou) were gradually ousted by Lushai between 1840 and 1850.<sup>35</sup> To F.K. Lehman, so-called new Kuki, especially Thadou are northern Chin, who pushed out of Chin hill into Manipur and into Naga hill of Burma and Assam by Lushai in middle of nineteenth century. Jimmy Jamkhomang Thadou (1998) however argues that new Kuki group came to Manipur between 16<sup>th</sup>- 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>36</sup> And Thadou migrated into Manipur from upper Burma (Chin hill) and Lushai hill in 1666 during time of Manipuri king Paikhomba. And by 1778 eight big villages have already been established, viz. Chahsat, Jampi, Laijaang, Suongpi, Luiokhai, Pangsang, Khoungjaang and Lonpi. Soon after, many other villages sprang up with their increases in numbers.<sup>37</sup> However some section of Thadou and Hmar

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<sup>33</sup> Shaw. Thadou Kukis, p.11.

<sup>34</sup> A.M. Meerwath. 1919. 'Andamanese, Nicobarese and the Hill Tribes of Assam'. Guahati: Spectrum Publications. p. 29.

<sup>35</sup> George A. Grierson.1967. 'Linguistic Survey of India (Vol. III)'. Delhi: Motila Banarasidas, p. 74.

<sup>36</sup> Jimmy JamkhomangThadou. 'Thadou Chronicles'. Self Publication, p.12.

<sup>37</sup> Thadou. 'Thadou Chronicles', p.16.

who accepted suzerainty of Lushai stayed back and identify them under nomenclature Mizo.<sup>38</sup>

Evidence thus suggests presence of Kukis in Manipur since ancient time. Old chronicle of Manipur states such as 'Puya' as well as 'Cheithorol Kumbaba' talk about *Kuki-Ahoungba* and *Kuki-Achaoba*. Although historicity of royal chronicle is disputed by many scholars nevertheless, there is enough evidence that Kuki inhabited southern hill present Manipur since time immemorial. In fact group of Kuki migrated from Kale-Kabaw valley toward western hill in 9<sup>th</sup> century suggests that such advance group have already occupied hill or highland southern to valley of Manipur. So, ethnic composition of hill of Manipur since early medieval period was such that northern hill were occupied by Naga and southern hill by Kuki. This two broad ethnic geography may be divided roughly in middle part of state running east west direction. However in latter 18<sup>th</sup> century due to internal conflict among different Kuki- chief many of this Kuki who occupied southern hill choose to migrate towards northern hill, which occupied by Naga. Advancement of this group to northward migration even reached present Nagaland, where some part of them can be still seen today. This northward migration from Chin hill was also noted by different colonial accounts such as Mackenzie, Johnstone, Dun, Brown, Lehman, Pemberton, McCulloch, Shakespeare, Shaw and others.

Six village chosen for the present study belong to group of Thadou-Kuki, who migrated from southern hill of Manipur during 19<sup>th</sup> century to present settlement in northern hill. Oral tradition preserved by elder persons clearly point out this.

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<sup>38</sup> Kipgen. 'Political and Economic History of the Kukis', p. 39.

### Present Settlement of Thadou in Manipur

Thadou constitutes 24.6 per cent of total scheduled tribe population of Manipur according to 2001 census. At present, they are found inhabiting all districts of Manipur with their heavy concentration in three districts: Senapati, Chandel and Churachandpur with 89.1 percent while remaining 10.9 per cent is distributed scarcely in other district.

**Table 3.1**  
**District wise Thadou population in Manipur, 2001**

Sl.No.	Name of District	Thadou Population	Proportion to Total Thadou Population
1	Senapati	72,535	39.7
2	Tamenglong	6888	3.7
3	Churachandpur	54929	30.1
4	Bishnupur	796	0.4
5	Thoubal	1154	0.6
6	Imphal West	2117	1.1
7	Imphal East	3821	2.1
8	Ukhrul	5268	2.8
9	Chandel	35086	19.2
10	Total	182, 594	24.6

Source: Office of Registrar General, India, pp. 22- 26

The figure above shows that of total Thadou population in Manipur according to 2001 census, almost four tenth of Thadou population is in Senapati district. They are dominant inhabitants of three sub- division of Senapati District popularly known as Sadar Hills. They are Kangpokpi, Saitu and Saikul, while in Churachandpur and in Chandel, they are dominant inhabitants.

Hence the present study focuses on Thadou in Sadar hill sub-division of Senapati district of Manipur. Present work attempts to study marginal communities which come under broad area of cultural study. The study concerns with social, cultural, economic and educational aspects of Thadou of Manipur which takes into its present circumstance in

light of change in time and space. Since present is product of past, attempt is made in following pages to highlight in brief traditional social structure of Thadou of Manipur.

## **SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

### **Economic Organisation**

From earliest time, Thadou-Kuki was solely dependent on jhum (shifting cultivation) for its economy besides other minor occupation like blacksmith, handicraft, fishing, hunting and trapping of animals etc. They were wholly dependent on product of jhuming for their livelihood. Paddy, maize, millet, chilly, pumpkin, gourd, bean, arum, cotton etc. were main agricultural crops where rice was their staple food. Main tool used for jhum cultivation are *heicha* (axe), *chempong* (dao), *tupeng* (spade), *koite* (sickle), *tucha* (hoe) etc.<sup>39</sup> Regarding trade relationship barter system was only means of exchanging goods. Money economy being unknown goods like *Dahpi* (Gongs), *khivui* (necklace of beads), *bilba* (earrings) and *chaocha/chaojang* (spiral brass) were some of the most profitable goods of time.<sup>40</sup> They had a well organised agro base economic institution<sup>41</sup> called *Lom* which occupied a central position in traditional socio- economic learning of the people. Function of Lom is concerned mainly with economic life of village. All able-bodied men and women of village join this organisation, irrespective of age and sex. Number of work, other than his own, attended to by a Lom member will be credited to his name and same number of work he thus earns will be repaid to him by other members

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<sup>39</sup> Sitlhou Mangjel Paokai. 1995. 'A Brief Account of the Thadous', in Naorem Sanajaoba (ed.): 'Manipur Past, Present and Future'. New Delhi: Mittal Publication, p. 239.

<sup>40</sup> Kipgen. 'The Thadou Kukis', p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Gangte. 'The Kukis of Manipur', p. 12.

with labour. In this way, Lom members reciprocate in helping each other and keeping village self-sufficient in matter of physical labour. Sometimes their Lom can be hired by any villager or Chief. In return they are given food and drink.<sup>42</sup> Thus, Lom is a traditional form of organisation where its member is trained in various socio- economic pursuits, be it, sports, hunting, fishing and cultivation.

T.S. Gangte categorised four different type of Lom on basis of age set groups of members such as: *Lompi* (literally means big labour corps consisting of grown up boy and girl, *Lomlai*(consist of junior unmarried boy and girl whose elders are in Lompi organisation), *Lomneo* (small labour corps consisting of third brother or sister of a family and other teenagers), *Lom Changpah* (literally refers to training group in cultivation work) and *LomLhang* (general corps).<sup>43</sup>

Though they are mostly dependent on agriculture for their sustenance the traditional Lom organisation today has now been replaced by modern secular youth organisations. At the village level is the youth clubs which function for better welfare of the village and of the youth as a whole. At a higher level there are Thadou Student Association (TSA), Thadou Baptist Association (TBA), Thadou Tribe Council (TTC) and Kuki Student Organisation (KSO) which includes all the Kuki tribes including Thadou and the likes.

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<sup>42</sup> Gangte. 'The Kukis of Manipur', p.132.

<sup>43</sup> Gangte. 'The Kukis of Manipur', pp. 132- 133

## Social Life

As social beings, Thadou enjoyed a relatively peaceful way of life. Their culture-one might say- was uncontaminated by any outside agency. Young folk formed a well organised and understanding spirit among themselves. Elders are paid high regards in every respect. Their main concern appears to have been to protect their society from external dangers, and to work for the proper functioning of their administration.<sup>44</sup>

Social institution consists of all structural components of a society through which main concerns and activities are organised, and social needs (such as those for order, belief, and reproduction) are met.<sup>45</sup> Some important institution of Thadou is:

**Family Life:** Thadou practice both joint and nuclear family. Permanent family in which the eldest son called '*Upa*' lives with his parents, unmarried brothers and sisters, in addition to his own children. Essentially, type of family of the eldest married son of a man having three or four generations living together is called a joint family. Other type of family is called nuclear family where younger brothers called '*Naopa*' established their own family with his wife and children. However, such nuclear family becomes joint family in course of time, when a man forming nuclear has a married son with his own family and children.<sup>46</sup>

**Birth:** Birth of a child is given high importance. For barren women certain rite is usually performed at her parental home. Since descent is reckoned in male line preference is always given for a son than daughter. A child is given a name as soon as it is known whether it is a boy or a girl. It is customary to add last name of paternal

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<sup>44</sup> Paokai. 'A Brief Account of the Thadous', p. 236.

<sup>45</sup> Marshall. 'Oxford Dictionary of Sociology', p. 318.

<sup>46</sup> Gangte. 'The Kukis of Manipur', p. 66.



grandfather/grandmother to name of eldest grandson/ granddaughter. Similarly, a part of name of maternal grandfather/ grandmother is added to name second son/ daughter. Other children are named after any friend or near relative of both father and mother. Celebration of child birth called *Naodop-ju* and *Naodop-an* are prepared for local midwife including close kinsmen of family. Nodop-ju is name of wine (now replaced by tea) prepared and naodop-an is food prepared for occasion.<sup>47</sup> After a few day time or after two or three year a ceremony called '*Naopui*' is done. Here a child is brought to its maternal uncle's house with gift of traditional shawl meant for maternal grandparent and rice beer (no tea) which is served by their *Tucha* and *Becha*. Maternal uncle in return kills a pig or mithun for feast keeping hind leg called *Samal* of killed animal for child's family to take back with them. He then performs *Lhalho* (a rite to ward off the evil eye and any future illnesses).<sup>48</sup>

### **Succession and Inheritance**

Descent is reckoned through male line and inheritance is primogeniture. Eldest son inherits deceased father's moveable and immoveable property. However he has no say over question of property as long as his father lives. No daughter can inherit her father's property even though she may be the only child of her parents. If a family has no son, ancestral property is generally passed on to the nearest male relatives.<sup>49</sup>

**Som (Dormitory):** Som is another remarkable traditional social institution of the Thadous which means bachelor dormitory where all the young boys of the village sleep

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<sup>47</sup> Goswami. 'Kuki Life and Lore', p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Letkhojam. 'Historical Traditions and Customary Law', p. 84.

<sup>49</sup> Prim Vaiphei. 1975. 'The Vaiphei Tribe'. Imphal, p. 7.

together at night. Unlike the youth dormitory system of some Naga tribes, the Thadou have no separate dormitory house. The boys of the village forms several groups and select a house having unmarried woman. The main purpose of Som is to defend the village from external dangers. However, in time of peace they render every possible service to the village community whenever required.<sup>50</sup> It serves as an institution wherein young people received non-formal traditional education. They learn handicrafts, technique of war, traditions, stories, songs, dance, discipline, social etiquette etc. However due to changes in the life style of the people particularly with Christianity and education the traditional practice of Som has disappeared. It can be said that the traditional Som system which has high value has now been replaced by modern agencies like schools, colleges and universities etc.

***Tucha and Becha:*** The institution of *Tucha* and *Becha* plays a very important role in the Thadou society. When a Thadou performs any function in his family, his *Tucha* and *Becha* take over all the charges and responsibilities for duly performing the function. *Tucha* are those relative established through marriage alliance wherein when a man marries he earns the relationship of his children and becomes the *Tute* or *Tuchas* of his in-laws. Whereas, *Becha* on the other hand are those any male relative chosen by the man who is bestowed with full power and authority of the men house. *Tucha* executes the entire work connected with all social functions of the family under the guidance of *Becha*. *Becha*, is the spokesman of the family. He speaks on behalf of the family in

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<sup>50</sup> Gangte. 'The Kukis of Manipur', p. 133-34.

family occasions and activities (in times of death, marriage and other related family functions).<sup>51</sup>

**Drink:** The Thadou are great drinkers of rice beer called *Ju*. It is served not only on important occasion. In the past every households has a pot of *Ju* which is drink by the family member and also being served to visitor. There are three kinds namely *Jukha*, *Vaiju* and *Anthom*. The first is distilled while the last two are made by fermentation caused by adding yeast. They took pride on the amount of *Ju* they can consume and competitions were held to see how much a man can drink in one breath without discomfort to himself and the party.<sup>52</sup> The customary usage of local brew fermented drink called *Ju* is now however replaced by tea and the like. Today modern tea with sugar with or without milk has replaced the traditional *Ju* (rice beer day). Besides, almost all households have red tea without sugar preferably cold always ready to be served to visitors.

**Thempu:** Literally means wise man, which refers to the Thadou priest and physician. In earlier days the *thempu* plays an important role where in almost every occasion his help and guidance is needed. He attends to all sickness, childbirth, marriage and death. He presides on all religious and social ceremonies.<sup>53</sup> In fact his presence is needed in all the life cycle ceremonies of the traditional Thadou-Kuki life. After Christianity the role played by the *Thempu* has been replaced by ordain Pastor and Deacons of the Church.

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<sup>51</sup> Letkhojam. 'Historical Traditions and Customary Law', p. 96.

<sup>52</sup> Shaw. 'Notes on the Thadou- Kukis', p. 93.

<sup>53</sup> Gangte. 'The Kukis of Manipur', p. 131.

## **Marriage**

In earlier days among the Thadou-Kuki society, monogamy, tribe endogamy with clan exogamy is the dominant forms of marriage. However today there is no longer restriction to inter and intra-marriages with other tribes or outside the village. They practiced two types of marriages i.e., marriage by negotiation and marriage by elopement where certain rules and custom have to be followed. Marriage by negotiation include preferential type of marrying one's mother's brother's daughter marriage (MBD) called *Neinu* for which the arrangement is normally made by the parents, marriage arrange by the parent, and also love marriage with the consent and permission of both the parents. This type of marriage is also commonly called arrange marriage. In every marriage the husband pays marriage price or bride price to the girls' family though the price may vary depending on the clan. If the younger sister marries earlier than her elder sister then the husband side has to pay a find. Remarriage of widow are permitted and there are also instance of levirate and sororate. While the practice of polyandry is completely absent polygyny exist in some form though it is rare.

## **Death**

Broadly death is categorised as natural and unnatural and accordingly the modes of disposal differ from one another. When a person dies of disease or of old age such a death is considered as natural death which is called *Thipha*. If, however, the body of a person gets swollen before death, it is considered as a case of unnatural death called *Thipom*. A person who dies in an accidents or mishaps like drowning, burning, falling, etc or attack by wild animals or leprosy and epidemic diseases, suicide or is killed by enemies, such

deaths are considered as unnatural deaths called *Thise*. Death occurring for the first time in a family called *Senhul* is also considered as unnatural.<sup>54</sup> The Thadous in olden days blame all death whether natural or unnatural to be the work of *Thilha* (evil spirit) and as such when a person died the men shout out 'Where is the Thilha who has taken you away? Let it show itself and we will kill it' then they take a dao and hack pillar and post to show their temper and determination of what they will do to the Thilha.<sup>55</sup> Disposal of death varied according to the nature and classification of death. However, with Christianity such belief has ceased. But the belief still continues in some forms when modern medical doctors fail to provide definite reason for the cause of sickness or death. Today all kinds of death whether natural or unnatural have been buried in the village cemetery in accordance with Christian faith by ordained Pastor.

### **Political Life**

Traditional Thadou-Kuki village is an important, social, economic and political unit. Village site is selected with reference to a good defense position and convenience of cultivation with water at hand<sup>56</sup> and village is the highest political unit. Chief of village is called *Kho-Haosa* and his village council is called '*Semang Upa*' or '*Semang Pachong*' which function within a territorial jurisdiction wielding its political authority and prerogatives over villagers in absolute term are supreme political power. Village is an independent political unit among Thadou, and chief of a village and his village council members become political leaders.

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<sup>54</sup> Tarun Goswami. 1985. 'Kuki Life and Lore'. Haflong: North Cachher Hills District Council, Assam, p. 177.

<sup>55</sup> Shaw. 'Notes on the Thadou- Kukis', p. 53.

<sup>56</sup> S. Bertram Carey & H. N. Tuck. 1976. 'The Chin Hills (vol. 1)'. Calcutta: Firma KLM Pvt. Lt d., p.135.

**Haosa (chief):** Political culture of Thadou during past is understood to be uncontaminated and un-encroached.<sup>57</sup> The chief called Haosa was the only man who has absolute authority over his subjects.<sup>58</sup> The chief was usually from the leading clans (*Upa* or senior man) of the society and whose office was hereditary, is traditionally the sole owner of the land within his jurisdiction.<sup>59</sup> The position of the chief is hereditary where the rule of primogeniture is strictly followed. He is assisted by the village council (*Semang-Pachong*) members appointed by him from time to time. He however always acts as the last authority in all cases, both civil and criminal. He was the sole owner of the village land. The villagers have no right over the land whatsoever. He has the right to expel anyone from the village. No one can leave the village without prior permission from the haosa. In case anyone leaves the village without his consent, then the chief has the right to confiscate all his property and crops. He wields a great deal of authority over the villagers who are mostly his kin group and junior to him by descent. The villager has no right of the land whatsoever. The chief, however, absolute is right over the land might be, normally allows, in consultation with his Council of Minister, the villagers to cultivate and utilise as per their requirements. But the villagers have to pay to the chief in return for such privileges in the shape of tributes called *Changseo* payable annually after harvest, even part of hunted games called *Saleng*. The chief is also entitled to free labour of each villager once in a year called *Khoutha*. Together with such rights, the haosa has

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<sup>57</sup> P.C. Misao.1970. 'History and Custom of the Thadou Kukis'. Self Publication, p. 237.

<sup>58</sup> Goswami. 'Kuki Life and Lore', p. 23.

<sup>59</sup> George T. Haokip. 2011. 'Changes in Kuki Traditional Land Ownership System', in Ngamkhohao Haokip and Micheal Lunminthang (ed.): 'Kuki Society; Past, Present and Future'. New Delhi: Maxford Books, p. 151.

certain obligations over the villagers. He has to protect their interest by providing security socially, politically and economically as well as from external aggression and danger.<sup>60</sup>

**'Semang Pachong' (village council):** It is composed of person of wisdom, integrity, knowledge of customary law etc. and is nominated by the Haosa to deal with social, political, economic, judicial matters etc. The main mechanism through which the council exercises its administration is the interpretation of the customary law. The Haosa as the chairman or head of this council presides over the meetings. The members of the council are exempted from payment of all kinds of tributes levied on the common villagers in token recognition of their services.<sup>61</sup> The Semang-Pachong is composed of: *Kho-Semang* (*kho* literally means village and *semang* means people with outstanding personality) is responsible for the whole village administration on behalf of the chief while the chief plays judicial role; *Kho-Pachong* (*kho* literally means village and *Pachong* means male champion in the hunting or warfare) is responsible for villages defense and security, village labour force and all works of the village (individual as well as collective); *Changloi* (collector of rice) is responsible on the revenue collection of the chief; *Lhangsam* (informer) is responsible for information and broadcasting<sup>62</sup>; *Thempu* (wise man) looks after the role of village priest as well as physician); *Thihkheng* (blacksmith) is responsible for manufacturing agricultural implements and weapons.<sup>63</sup> All these cabinet members are fully responsible for good governance of the village concerned.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Gangte. 'The Kukis of Manipur', p. 127

<sup>61</sup> Gangte. 'The Kukis of Manipur', p. 130

<sup>62</sup> Paokhohao Haokip. 2006. 'Re- Discovery of Traditional Institutions of the Kukis in Manipur with Special Reference to Lawn and Sawm'. Unpublished BD Thesis, p. 16

<sup>63</sup> T.S. Gangte. 'The Kukis of Manipur', p.132.

<sup>64</sup> T. Lunkim. 2013. 'Traditional System of Kuki Administration', in ThongkhohalHaokip (ed.): 'The Kukis of Northeast India'. Delhi: Bookwell, p. 6

Contemporary Thadou political life has witnessed considerable changes with the introduction of modern money economy. George T. Haokip contends that today without taking genealogy into consideration, well-to-do individuals buy plot of land and established villages and they become chief against the traditional practice. Thus, the traditional custom for the clan elder to become chief on genealogical line have not been followed and it practically leads to the commercialisation of chieftainship. In the event of introduction of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS), many new villages have been registered so as to gain the benefit of the scheme, in fact this has been done to enrich them with easy money without working.<sup>65</sup>

There are also few villages at present where women have become owner of the village land by becoming the chief of the village which was unthinkable in the traditional set up. The enactment of the Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act, 1956 could not make much impact in the Thadou-Kuki villages, since the village chiefs are made Ex-Officio Chairman of their villages by the stipulation of the Act. In spite of various government Acts to abolish chieftainship rights in the hill areas of Manipur after independence, chieftainship system still stand strong braving all the Acts.

### **Religious Life**

The traditional Thadou Kukis believed in one Supreme God called *Chung Pathien*. It is the concept of Chung Pathien or the source of 'All Creation' that is considered to be the highest benevolent God who lives in heaven or sky. He is believed to have created the

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<sup>65</sup> George T. Haokip. 2011. 'Changes in Kuki Traditional Land Ownership System', in Ngamkhohao Haokip and Michael Lunminthang, (eds.): 'Kuki Society: Past, Present and Future'. New Delhi: Maxford Book, p. 164.



universe and all the living beings. All the people firmly believe that everything concerned with prosperity, growth and strength in life is nothing but the free gift of Chung Pathien. He is considered omnipotent and omniscient. Thus, he is all powerful but he does not want any propitiation or worship or appeasement.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, they never constructed any place of worship nor did they offer any sacrifices to the Supreme Being but rather to certain spirits called Thilhas, both benevolent and malevolent who wield a profound influence on their life and culture. Goodness and kindness are associated with the benevolent spirit while all the misfortune, diseases and death etc are believed to be the work of evil spirits which needs to be appeased or propitiated. So, elaborate rituals with offerings and sacrifices of animals or whatever is required, must be performed to appease the evil spirits with the belief that if the evil spirit gets satisfaction out of the sacrificial offerings, it will not harm them. Hills, forests, and rivers are conceived as having some potentialities and the people have to interact with them all the time for their existence and perpetuation. They offer sacrifices of different kinds of animals to the selected places wherever they consider being the abode of spirits. So, ritual ceremonies are closely related to malevolent spirits to avoid being troubled and to benevolent spirits for ensuring good health and prosperity.

### **Ceremony**

In traditional Thadou Kuki society, religious ritual forms an integral. Since, they believe in predominance and interference of supernaturalism in their daily affair, a number of rituals are performed. Some important rituals are: *Chang- Ai* is a festival performed by a

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<sup>66</sup> Lunkim. 'Traditional System of Kuki Administration', p.161.

person who harvests paddy much above his requirement for more than a decade and express thanks to God for beautiful harvest conducted under sole supervision and direction of women.<sup>67</sup> *Sa-Ai* ceremony is performed by man who kills a tiger, an eagle (*Muvanlai*), a wild bear, *Thoche* and *Vengke*.<sup>68</sup> And the ritual is performed to gain complete dominance over spirit of killed animals.<sup>69</sup> *Chon* ceremony can only be performed by a person kills 7 each of animals killed in Sa- Ai and everything else must be in multiple of seven.<sup>70</sup> *Khuongchoi Ceremony* concerns religious rites involving young boy and girl directly in competition with evil spirit, called *Thilha*, in order to earn fame for Lom or young organisation of village, which combines with a sense of festivity.<sup>71</sup> Besides they also perform certain ritual to please supernatural being for socio- economic and other purpose in their day to day life.

Today, primitive faith and belief underwent change with Christianity. Their ignorance and belief which led them to offer sacrifice and offering to evil spirit is ceased. Their belief in existence of one God makes it easier for them to profess Christianity, which in turn has a profound impact in their socio- cultural life.

### **Conclusion**

The chapter reveals Thadou, like other tribes, has its own distinct custom which is similar to all Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups. They have their history of origin, migration and settlement as preserved in their oral tradition. They presently live in state of Manipur and many of

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<sup>67</sup> Gangte. 'The Kukis of Manipur', p. 185.

<sup>68</sup> Gangte. 'The Kukis of Manipur', p. 179.

<sup>69</sup> Goswami. 'Kuki Life and Lore', p. 116.

<sup>70</sup> Shaw. 'Notes on the Thadou Kukis', p. 76.

<sup>71</sup> Gangte. 'The Kukis of Manipur', p. 198.

them are found in Nagaland, Assam, Mizoram and Burma. They have their varied custom and tradition from time immemorial with their economic activity derived mainly from jhuming, their well organised corporate labour crop, their social life indicating peace and harmony, their distinct political culture with hereditary chieftain having absolute control, their religion before Christianity centered around belief in one god but sacrifice and offering made to various spirits. Their primitive notion of belief in evil spirit dominating everyday life has however undergone change after Christianity. At the same time, use of fermented drink Ju has now been replaced by tea. The once important institution of Lom (labour organisation) and Som (dormitory) vanished with spread of education and change in economy. Chieftainship underwent change though hereditary ship still continues. Role Theimpu played is now replaced by Pastor and Deacon's of Church. Further many ceremonies related to birth, marriage and death today still retain manifestation of their traditional primitive form, although many rites and duties are performed according to Christian faith. Profile of Thadou highlights certain aspects of its life, but next chapter is devoted to economic life of the community of people, which is otherwise regarded one of the most important component for every community and society.