

Chapter: VI

SOCIO-CULTURAL PROFILE

In last chapter I highlighted problem of Thadou education. This chapter deals with social-cultural milieu of Thadou which includes family, marriage, kinship, dress attire, ornament, musical instrument, song, dance and festival. The chapter also covers feature like family size, type of family, and rate of marriage, type of marriage, age and sex composition, division of religious denomination etc.

Family

Family is fundamental and functional unit in a village life. Anthro-sociological literature reveals joint family always exists in India. In fact, early Sanskrit literature describes the same type of family as found in many parts of India. Ancient Indian family normally termed as traditional joint family was join by residence, property and function.¹ Irawati Karve defines joint family as “a group of people, who hold property in common, who participates in common family worship and who are related to each other as some particular type of kinship.”²

I. P. Desai includes economic cooperation, common property and mutual obligation as essential feature of joint family.³ He classified Indian family into five type: 1) nuclear family which is separated in terms of residence and functioning, 2) functionally joint

¹ Irawati Karve. 1953. ‘Kinship Organisation in India’. Poona: Deccan Valley Monograph, p. 21.

² Karve. ‘Kinship Organisation in India’, p. 10.

³ I.P. Desai. 1956. ‘The Joint Family in India: An Analysis’, Sociological Bulletin 5 (2): 147-148.

family which is residentially nuclear but joint with other household by way of fulfillment of mutual obligation, 3) functionally and substantively joint family which is residentially nuclear but joint in terms of property, functioning and fulfilling mutual obligation, 4) marginally joint family which is joint in residence, property and function but consist of two generation only, 5) traditional joint family, joint in term of residence, property, function and also consist of three or more than three generation together.⁴ Ailean D. Ross classifies Indian family into four types: 1) large joint family consisting of three or more generation with common residence, property and function, 2) small joint family, 3) nuclear family and 4) nuclear family with dependents consisting of parents, their unmarried children and with one or more dependents.⁵

Like other Kuki tribes, the Thadou are patriarchal society. The eldest male member is head of a family with absolute authority over his family. Traditional line of ancestry continues through him. Descent is traced through father line and custom of patrilocal residence is followed. Rule of inheritance is primogeniture that is, eldest son inherits all properties of his father. He however has no say over question of property as long as his father remains alive. No daughter can inherit her father's property even though she may be only child of her parents. Younger son after his marriage and procurement of children leave his natal house and establish his own. So, both nuclear and joint family is observed among Thadou. Following shows percentage of nuclear family and joint family:

⁴ Desai. 'The Joint Family in India', pp. 157-61.

⁵ Ailean Ross. 1961. 'The Hindu Family and its Urban Setting'. Toronto: Oxford University Press, p. 34.

Table 6.1
Type of family

Sl. No.	Category	Motbung	T.Moulbung	Chalva	Govajang	Saikul	Bolkot	Total
1	Nuclear Family	36 (72.0)	29 (58.0)	31 (62.0)	28 (56.0)	32 (64.0)	34 (60.0)	190 (63.33)
2	Joint Family	14 (28.0)	21 (42.0)	19 (38.0)	22 (44.0)	18 (36.0)	16 (40.0)	110 (36.66)
Total		50	50	50	50	50	50	300

Thadou society is patriarchal, patrilocal, and patrilineal where rule of primogeniture is followed. The data shows that of 300 families in the study villages, majority of families i.e. 63.33 % are nuclear in forms. Such family consists of parents and their unmarried children, while remaining 36.66% family are joint or extended family.

Thus nuclear family is much more than joint family system. In joint or extended families people of two or more generations live together i.e., husband and wife, their married children and parents. Sometime, the eldest grandson with wife and offspring along with some near relative is also included. The study reveals that the nuclear family is much more than joint family system. On other hand, younger son establishes a separate house from parents. I.P. Desai's classification of Indian functional joint family which is residentially nuclear, but joint with other household activities with fulfillment of mutual obligation is applicable to Thadou family. However, large extended family is very rare.

Family Size

Family is an intimate domestic group made up of people related to one another by bonds of blood, sexual mating, or legal ties.⁶ Size of family has a great bearing on maintenance of family. Family size of villages is classified into three groups: viz. small (1- 4), medium (5- 8), large (9-above). Table shows size of family in village:

Table 6.2
Size of household

Sl. No.	Category	Motbung	T.Moulbung	Chalva	Govajang	Saikul	Bolkot	Total
1	Small (1- 4)	11 (22.0)	17 (34.0)	13 (26.0)	16 (32.0)	11 (22.0)	13 (26.0)	81 (27.0)
2	Medium (5- 8)	24 (48.0)	20 (40.0)	26 (52.0)	19 (38.0)	25 (50.0)	22 (44.0)	136 (45.33)
3	Large (9 above)	15 (30.0)	13 (26.0)	11 (22.0)	15 (30.0)	14 (28.0)	15 (30.0)	83 (27.66)
Total		50	50	50	50	50	50	300

In six village almost half household (45.33 per cent) are medium size (5-8 member) family, followed by large size family (9 above) with 27.66% as against small size family (1-4 member) of over two-tenth (27%).

In selected village medium size family out number small and large size family. It is found that out of 50 households in Motbung village; maximum number of households i.e. over four-tenth (48%) is medium sized family, while three-tenth (30%) is large size family and over two-tenth (22%) is small sized family. In village T. Moulbung, Govajang and Chalva almost half of family are medium size with small size family more in number than large size family. Whereas in Saikul village half of household (50 %) are medium size family with large size families a little more than small size families. Bolkot village

⁶ Marshall. 'Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, p. 222.

on other hand has 44 % medium size families with large size families over small size family.

Thus, from villages under study, it is seen that medium size family is more in number than over small and large size family. Since Thadou society is primogeniture, younger son and daughter after marriage establish their own separate household. Such a practice may have contributed to rise in medium size family.

Age and Sex Distribution

Sex and age exert considerable influence on aspects of the composition and structure of the population. Age influences and other factors like education, employment, occupational composition, death rate and certain social and cultural activities of the community have been taken into consideration. Following table indicate the sex wise distribution of population in six villages:

Table 6.3
Sex wise distribution of population

Sl. No.	Category	Motbung	T.Moulbung	Chalva	Govajang	Saikul	Bolkot	Total
1	Male	148 (46.39)	150 (46.15)	186 (52.54)	148 (46.68)	177 (53.47)	159 (52.82)	968 (49.71)
2	Female	171 (53.61)	175 (53.84)	168 (47.45)	169 (53.31)	154 (46.52)	142 (47.17)	979 (50.28)
Total		319	325	354	317	331	301	1947

Out of the entire 1947 population 968 (49.71%) constitute male while remaining 979 (50.28%) constitute female population. The female population is a little higher than the males.

Regarding age and sex composition in study village, following table reveals the population distribution of all age and sex distribution. The total number of males and females are divided into four age groups with children (0-14), youth (15- 35), middle age (6-60) and old age (60 above).

Table 6.4
Population distribution by age and sex

Sl.No	Age Group	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
1	0-14	327	33.78	329	33.61	656	33.69
2	15- 35	283	29.23	346	35.34	629	32.31
3	36- 60	259	26.75	228	23.28	487	25.1
4	60 above	99	10.22	76	7.76	175	8.98
Total		968		979		1947	

As regard age and sex composition, above tabulated data shows that over one-third (33.69%) are within age group of 0-14, followed by children between age group of 15-35 with 32.31%, 25.1% belong to middle age group i.e., between 36- 60 and a small fraction of 8.98% constituted old age group of 60 and above. Thus economically active population is more than unproductive population with female power crossing male.

Though the Thadou society is patriarchal in nature, female always outnumbered male. Between age group of 0-14 and 15-35, female is more in number, while on other hand male outnumbered female between age group of 36- 60 and 60 above. Though no definite reason can be attributed to this, it may possibly be because of the high death rates among the females during child birth or other kind of sickness.

Marriage

Marriage is a universal phenomenon and it is defined differently by different scholars. According to Gordon Marshal marriage is traditionally conceived to be largely recognised relationship between an adult and female, that carries certain right and obligation.⁷ E.Westermark in his book ‘The History of Human Marriage’, defined marriage as a relation of one or more men to one or more women which is recognised by custom or law and involved certain rights and duties both in case of parties entering the union and in case of children born out of it.....marriage always implies the right to sexual intercourse.⁸ According to Ralph Linton marriage is a socially recognised union between persons of opposite sex.⁹ To Thomas William marriage is a culturally defined and recognised social relationship involving legitimate sexual relations, reproduction, parentage, economic cooperation and residence.¹⁰ Likewise many anthropologists, sociologists and other social scientists have given their own conception on marriage. However, as Manish Kumar Raha argued that most of the definitions do not cover all forms of marriage such as- monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, polygynandry, group marriage and marriage between members of the same sex. He defines marriage as a socially approved relationship of one or more persons involving residential co-habitation,

⁷ Marshall. ‘Dictionary of Sociology’, p. 388.

⁸ E. Westermark. 1921. ‘The History of Human Marriage’. London: Mac Millan and CQ.,p.1.

⁹ R. Linton. 1936. ‘The Study of Man’. New York: Appleton Century Crofts, p.173.

¹⁰ T. R. William. 1990. ‘Cultural Anthropology’. New Jersey: Prentice Halls Eaglewood Cliffs, p. 269.

socio- economic co-operation and reciprocal rights and obligations between partners entering into union.¹¹

Marital Status

Marriage in the Thadou society is patrilocal where women goes to live with her husband family and assumes their clan name. Like many other tribal societies, marriage among the Thadou-Kuki is a socially sanctioned institution where certain customs and ceremonies are performed to get social recognition and sanction. In traditional Thadou-Kuki society, monogamy, tribe endogamy with clan exogamy is the dominant forms of marriage. They practiced arranged marriages of preferential type, which are commonly cross-cousin marriage, i.e. a man marrying his maternal uncle's daughter called *Neinu* for which arrangement is normally made by parents. The traditional arranged marriages were solemnised by village priests called *Thempu* at residence of the bridegroom in accordance with prescribed rites and ceremonies.

After the coming of Christianity, marriages are solemnised in Church by ordained pastors in accordance with the rites and ceremonies of the Church. Monogamy, cross cousin marriage, sororate, levirate, marriage by elopement, marriage by negotiation, bride price is some important aspect of the marriage system. Adult marriage is the rule and there is no restriction to inter and intra-marriages with other tribes or outside the village. Divorce rarely occurs and widow and widower remarriage is permitted. Following table shows distribution of sex wise marital status of study village:

¹¹ Manish Kumar Raha. 2007. 'Marriagae in India with Special Reference to Arunachal Pradesh' in Tamo Mebang and M.C. Behera(eds.): 'Tribal Society: Cultural Dynamics and Social Realities'. New Delhi: Bookwell, p. 23.

Table 6.5
Distribution of sex wise marital status

Sl. No.	Category	Motbung		T.Moulbung		Chalva		Govajang		Saikul		Bolkot		Total	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	Unmarried	76 (51.35)	95 (55.55)	70 (46.66)	91 (52.0)	87 (46.77)	65 (38.69)	68 (45.94)	75 (44.37)	97 (54.81)	77 (50.0)	66 (41.5)	74 (52.11)	464 (47.93)	477 (48.72)
2	Married	68 (45.94)	72 (42.1)	76 (50.66)	78 (44.57)	91 (48.92)	98 (58.33)	74 (50.0)	87 (51.47)	76 (42.93)	68 (44.15)	87 (54.71)	65 (45.77)	472 (48.76)	468 (47.81)
3	Widower/ Widow	3 (2.1)	2 (1.16)	4 (2.66)	5 (2.85)	7 (3.76)	4 (2.38)	5 (3.37)	6 (3.55)	4 (2.25)	7 (4.54)	5 (3.14)	3 (2.11)	28 (2.89)	27 (2.75)
4	Divorced	1 (0.67)	2 (1.16)	–	1 (0.57)	1 (0.53)	1 (0.59)	1 (0.64)	1 (0.59)	–	2 (1.29)	1 (0.62)	–	4 (0.41)	7 (0.71)
Total		148	171	150	175	186	168	148	169	177	154	159	142	968	979

The above table provides us with the distribution of marital status of respondent in study village. Out of 1947 members, 48.29% are married with 48.76% male and 47.81% female. The number of widower and widow is 55 with 2.89 % and 2.75%. The number of divorced in all the six villages is very low with only 0.41% males and 0.71% female. The remaining 941 are unmarried with 47.93% male and 48.72 % female.

Divorce is not common among them though it is not unknown. One can divorce one's spouse on the ground of adultery, incapability, physical abuse, barrenness, and ill behaviour. The main cause during course of fieldwork reveals that differences in opinion between couples in certain personal matter are certainly the most probable reason for most of the divorces. If a husband divorce his wife then he is fine one mithun (or in cash) while the girl family have to returned the bride price paid at the time of marriage.

Type of Marriage

Rule of monogamy prevails among Thadou. Practice of polyandry is completely absent, while polygamy is not practiced although there are rare cases. In case of barren women, husband is allowed to re-marry. Cross cousin marriage, sororate, levirate, marriage by elopement, marriage by negotiation is common. Practice of both levirate and sororate marriage is also found though rare. The society allows a widower to marry the sister of his deceased wife. Likewise when a husband dies his widow is free to marry the brother of her deceased husband. If the widow or widower does not want to marry her/his brother in-law/sister in-law, he/she is free to marry any other person. The practice of preferential type of marrying one's mother's brother's daughter today however has almost died,

everyone prefer to marry according to their own choice. The table below shows the distribution of type of marriages in the study villages:

Table 6.6
Type of marriage

Sl. No	Category	Motbung	T.Moulbung	Chalva	Govajang	Saikul	Bolkot	Total
1	Marriage by love	55 (71.42)	56 (68.29)	68 (69.38)	62 (71.26)	51 (67.11)	52 (61.17)	343 (67.92)
2	Marriage by negotiation	12 (15.58)	20 (24.39)	18 (18.36)	17 (19.54)	18 (23.68)	23 (27.1)	108 (21.38)
3	Cross Cousin (MBD)	6 (7.79)	5 (6.1)	9 (9.18)	7 (8.1)	5 (6.57)	8 (9.41)	40 (7.92)
4	Sororate	3 (3.89)	–	3 (3.1)	1 (1.14)	2 (2.63)	2 (2.35)	11 (2.17)
5	Levirate	1 (1.29)	1 (1.21)	–	–	1 (1.31)	–	3 (0.59)
Total		77	82	98	87	76	85	505

Almost seven-tenth (67.92 %) marriages in the study villages are a result of love marriage, two-tenth (21.38) constitute negotiated marriage and 7.92 % is cross cousin marriage; 2.17 % are sororate marriages; while a small fraction of 0.59 are levirate marriages.

Thus, it can be seen that though sororate and levirate marriage is permissible it is rare. It is practiced only in some unavoidable circumstances. While monogamy continues to be the desired form of marriage, cross cousin marriage is not strictly followed today. Today complete freedom in choosing partner has replaced the traditional cross cousin marriage. When a boy and a girl fall in love they express their desire to marry to their parents and if both parents agree to it, necessary arrangements are made to get them married in the Church. However, if they don't agree the lovers usually elope. As such, Marriage by

elopement is most common form of marriage today. The table below indicates the number of marriage in Church and marriage by elopement:

Table 6.7
Distribution of marriage in Church and outside Church

Sl. No.	Category	Motbung	T.Moulbung	Chalva	Govajang	Saikul	Bolkot	Total
1	Marriage in Church	18 (23.37)	25 (30.48)	27 (27.55)	24 (27.58)	23 (30.26)	31 (36.47)	148 (29.31)
2	Marriage outside Church	59 (76.62)	57 (69.51)	71 (72.44)	63 (72.41)	53 (69.73)	54 (63.52)	357 (70.69)
Total		77	82	98	87	76	85	505

The above table reveals that seven-tenth (70.69%) marries outside the Church (marriage by elopement) while almost three-tenth (29.31 %) marriages are performed in the Church (negotiated marriage). Marriage by elopement or marriage outside the Church is more in number than marriage in the Church.

Thus, there are only few cases of negotiated/arranged marriage performed in the Church. Marriage by elopement is on the rise because arranged marriage in the Church involved great financial burden of both families.

Kinship

Kinship is one of the main principles of organisation in human society. It establishes relationships between individuals and groups on the model of biological relationship between parents and children, between siblings, and between marital partners. It refers to

people who are related by consanguinity and affinity.¹² Relationship base on blood is called consanguinity whereas relationship established through marriage refers to affinal kin. The Thadou kinship terminology is of classificatory system of reckoning relatives. Clan membership forms the basis of kinship system. The Thadous of Manipur are divided into 31 clans and many more sub-clans which are further divided into numerous subsequent clans. They recognised each other by the usage of classificatory terms in addressing relative and clan member from both parent's side. A few term of kinship terminology are given below:

¹²Marshall. 'Dictionary of Sociology', p. 340.

Table 6.8
Kinship terminology in Thadou

Consanguine and affinal kin	
Thadou	Kinship Category
<i>Hepu_</i>	Consanguine- father's father, mother's father, mother's brother, mother's brother son Affinal- wife's father, wife's brother, wife's brother's son
<i>Hepi</i>	Consanguine- father's mother, mother's father, mother's brother's wife Affinal- wife's mother
<i>Hepa</i>	Consanguine- father Affinal- wife's father
<i>Hepalen</i>	Consanguine- father elder brother
<i>Hepaneo</i>	Consanguine- father younger brother
<i>Henu</i>	Consanguine- father mother Affinal- wife's mother, husband's mother
<i>Henulen</i>	Consanguine- father's elder brother's wife
<i>Henuneo</i>	Consanguine- father's younger brother's wife
<i>Henungah</i>	Affinal- mother's sister and mother's brother's daughter
<i>Heni</i>	Consanguine- father's sister Affinal- husband's mother (heni is used in case the ego and mother belong to same clan)
<i>He- U</i>	Consanguine- elder brother, elder sister, father's brother's children, father's sister's children, mother's sister's children Affinal- husband's elder brother, husband's elder brother's wife, elder sister husband, elder brother's wife, wife sister's husband
<i>Nao / Boi</i>	Younger brother, younger sister
<i>Chapa</i>	Son ,any married person may also use this term for any man who is his son's age
<i>Chanu</i>	Daughter
<i>Tute</i>	Grand children
<i>Jipa/jinu</i>	Wife/ Husband
<i>Nulam</i>	Wife sister's husband
<i>Hegang</i>	Father's sister's husband, husband of any clanswoman

The degree of kinship bond plays vital function in Thadou society. The kinship terminology given above has a specific role to play in the life circle of a person's as well as on auspicious function where it summons its entire kin and clan member. The ties of kinship between individuals are established and proclaimed at a person's birth, marriage, celebratory feast of any kind and death. They traced their pedigree through the payment of 'Sating' (backbone part of an animal killed in a game) to the clan head; *Sangong*, the

neck part, is given to the maternal uncle while ‘*Sakeng*’ or the hind leg is given to the village chief. The most important kinship relations of a man are those of his own agnatic lineage and clan group. Beside this, the maternal side and clan group are also important so are the nephew and niece. Thus there are various categories of kinship relationships in Thadou-Kuki society which are further discussed in the following.

Pa: Pa stands for father. It includes one’s own father, father’s brother, mother’s sister’s husband, wife father and brother and all male relative except father’s sister’s husband and mother’s brother. Father’s elder brother is called *Palen* while father younger brother is addressed as *Paneo*. The most important kinship relations among the Thadou is that of agnatic lineage where all are address as father, brother and son depending on their age and where the father elder brother who is regard as Palen has certain responsibility toward his younger brothers and sister family. Palen that is one’s father elder brother is entitle to get the bride price of the eldest born daughter of all the junior brother and if the junior brother has no son all the immovable properties goes to him. While a man also regards all clansmen of his father age and senior than his father age as ‘Pa’ in union with full or part of their first or last name e.g. *Thangkholal* is the names which may be join to the prefix Pa with full or part of the name as *Pa-Thangkholal* or *Pa-Thang* or *Pa-Lal*. Also a man addresses those who are of his father age as Pa to show respect though he may not necessarily be a relative or a clansman. Though the term Pa stand for father, in reality while addressing one more often used *Hepa* instead of just *Pa*.

Nu: *Nu* literally mean mother including one’s own mother, father’s elder brother wife, father’s younger brother wife, wife mother, husband’s mother, mother’s sisters, mother’s brother daughter and all female relative from both father and mother side of same

generation except father sister and mother's brother wife. In the same way as the used of *Pa* and *Nu* is often used in conjunction with the full or first or last name in addressing a kin except one's own mother and wife or husband mother. While one's father's elder brother wife is regard as *Nulen* (senior mother) the younger brother wife is regard as *Nuneo* (junior mother). Mother's brother daughter is address as *Nungahneo* in conjunction with part of her name in classifying her with one's own mother's sister. Similarly the word *Nu* is used in addressing all the female relatives from one's mother clan. Also one addresses those who are of his mother age as *Nu* to show respect though she may not necessarily be a relative.

***Pu* and *Pi*:** The word *Pu* invariably stands for one's own father's father and mother's father. It also includes a broad category of father's father and mother's other's mother, mother brother and mother brother son and all male relative from the mother side irrespective of generation. The term *Pute* is applies to all one's mother's agnates. Since, Thadou society is patriarchal in nature, a great deal of importance is attached to one's eldest mother's brothers who have great responsibility toward his sister and nieces and nephews. The senior maternal uncle is address as *Hepulen* while those junior is refer to as *Hepuneo*. One's life is incomplete without a blessing ceremony performed by the maternal uncle who also in turn has the right to claim on his sister and nephews death their death price known as *Longman*, a customary practices of the Thadous. Similarly, the entire male clan member from one's mother's side is address as *Pu* and their wife as *Pi* who is in the same age group of their maternal uncle and maternal-grandfather.

The term *Pi* is used to refer to the wife of whom one addressed as *Pu*. The senior maternal uncle wife is called *Hepi* while the juniors are called *Hepineo*. Preferences for

one's mother's brother daughter called *Neinu* among the Thadou is a good display of sound relationship between one's maternal uncle's families and their sisters. *Pu* and *Pi* is also used to address any elderly person even though they may not be related to the ego.

***U* and *Nao*:** *U* is a term used for any elder person (male and female) who are elder than one's self and *Nao* is a term used to refer to children and those younger than one's self. Both the term is used irrespective of sex distinction. But for one's own siblings separate term is used. In referring to one's own elder sibling, *Upa* is used for elder brother and *Unu* for elder sister. Similarly for younger siblings *Naonu* for younger sister and *Naopa* for younger brother are in used. However with regard to others, the prefix *U* is used with part of the named in referring to elders and for someone younger their name itself is used.

***Tu*:** The term *Tu* is used with reference to one's sister children, father's sister children, son's children and daughter children respectively irrespective of sex distinction. However, for differentiation, *Tunu* for female and *Tupa* for male are used. The term *Tu* is also in used in referring to the children of his clanswomen, but his closes are hisuterine nephew and nieces. While referring *Ka* is added before the prefix *Tu*.

***Heni* and *Hegang*:** *Heni* is a term used in addressing one's father's sisters and any female clan member while *Hegang* implies father sister husband and husband of any clanswoman. However, it is most commonly used in referring to one's own father's sister and her husband. In order to maintain good relationship between a man and his sister's husband and children, the Thadou had a customary practice of choosing one's sister husband as Tucha of his house. The term *Hegang* thus is not a classificatory system rather it is earned by marrying one's father sister and thus become Tucha in their house.

Phung: The word *Phung* literally means clan. Apart from the kinship relation of one's immediate relatives from both parents side, clan member also plays an important role. The Thadou society is composed of as many as 31 clans. These clans are further composed of a number of sub clans or lineages. A person regards all the clansmen who are his father age as *Hepa*, his grandfather age as *Hepu*, his mother age as *Heno*, his grandmother age as *Hepi*, his elder as *He-U*, his younger as *Nao* or *Boi*. *Hepa*, *Heno*, *Hepi*, *Hepu*, *He-U*, *Nao/Boi* is a common classificatory terms used in addressing others irrespective of which clan (Phung) one's belong depending on their age.

Traditional Dress and Attire

Occasional dresses of Thadou-Kukis can be group into two viz., shawl called *Ponsil* for men and wrap round called *Ponve* for women. These dresses are woven by themselves with different designs and patterns. They are six in number. They are: *Pon-mongvom*, *Saipikhup*, *Thangnangpon*, *Ponlhe*, *Khamtang* and *Pon-dum*. They are further classified in following table:

Table 6.9
Name of traditional dress and attire

Sl. No.	Name of Shawl/wrap round	Use
1	Saipikhup	A shawl for men only
2	Thangnang	A shawl for men only
3	Pondum	A shawl for men and a wrap-round for women
4	Ponlhe	Shawl for both men and women
5	Pon Mongvum	Shawl for both men and women
6	Khamtang	A wrap round for women only

On the basis of style of wearing, traditional dresses of the Thadou-Kukis are classified as follows:

Mens' Dress

Men's dresses normally include *Saipikhup*, a shawl with black colour background embroidered in both ends in different pattern; *Thangnang*, a shawl with black colour background embroidered in both ends with white and red colour; *Pondum*, plain dark blue shawl with no border; *Ponlhe*, plain white shawl, used as nightgown or winter shawl; *Pon-mangvom*, white background cloth with one black stripe at each border.

Women Dress

Women's dresses normally include *Ponve*, a wrap-round. *Ponve* is of two types: *Khamtang*, black colour background embroidered at both edges with a mixture of red, yellow and red colour and *Pondum*, a black background wrap-round with few (say three lines) blue colour strip at the border. The later is worn only in funeral. They also used *Pon-mangvom*, white background cloth with one black stripe at each end as shawl. *Khamtang* is said to be *Ponjemhom* (originator of different traditional designs and patterns). There is a legendary myth regarding the origin of *Khamtang* which goes as follows:¹³

According to legend, it is said that a primal Thadou lady had once fall in love with *Lhangnel* (a ghost or powerful spirit that cannot be seen physically with human eyes). One day, when the lady was weaving a cloth on *kempdo/kempum* (a platform like courtyard of the house), *Lhangnel* (the lover of the lady) came to her taking the form of a python. The python came and stopped under the *kempum* and let her know that he was her lover. The

¹³ Information gathered from few selected elders such as Kimkhoneng Lhouvum, Paokhohao Haokip, Loilam Chongloi, and others. Interview held at different time during 2013 in Sadar Hills, Senapati Distict, Manipur.

lady then wove the cloth taking the design/pattern of the upper belly of the python which resembles the seeds of cucumber. Thus, from there on, it is believed that cloths came to be woven with different designs/patterns.

The background of most of the above mentioned traditional shawl and wrap-round are mostly black in colour. The designs are of different colour such as red, yellow, green, white etc. So black is said to be the traditional colour of the Thadou. However today, different colour is in used. Traditional shawl like *Saipikhup* and *Thangnang* meant for men are also now being weaved as wrap-round for women having the same design with varying colour.

Traditional Ornament

The Thadou have ornaments for both male and female. The ornaments include:

- 1) *Bilkam* (a type of ring-shaped earring worn by women to stretch the earlobes).
- 2) Hah le Chao (bracelets worn around the arm is called *Hah*, and bangles worn beyond the elbow at the wrist is *Chao*)
- 3) *Khi* (necklace worn by women such such as *Khichongvui*, *Samphohvui*, *Samphaivui*, *Khimolkang (ah lhalhe)*, *Khiengvui*, *khi mu lop*, etc.)
- 4) *Khiba* (a cornelian beads perched by a string worn by both men and women as earring in earlier days)
- 5) *Tuhpah* (a head gear, decorated with feathers of peacock or hornbill worn by men while performing traditional dance).

Musical Instrument

There are different kinds of traditional musical instruments used by the Thadou-Kukis. These instruments play an important role in the social and cultural life. They are used separately for different songs and dances. The musical instruments are briefly discussed as under:

Dah: *Dah* is a Kuki indigenous gong. It is made of huge mass of brass with a ball-like circle bulging out at the centre on which the beating of the gong is done to produce sound. It is played/ used at the time of festivals, death, village meetings and on rituals. It is used as one of the items of bride price at the time of marriage, and as a fine of divorce. There are different types of gongs depending on their sizes. They are *Dahpi*, *Dolpabu* and *Dahcha*. *Dahpi* is the biggest and most valued of the gongs. Besides it is used on all important occasions and in times of death. *Dolpabu* consists of three gongs of equal size, each with a separate note. *Dahcha* is the smallest gong. It consists of three gongs of equal size and shape.

Khong: *Khong* is the indigenous drum of the Kukis. It is made from animal skin. There are different types of drums used by the Thadou; *Khongpi/Khonglen* (big/large drum), *Khonglai* (medium size drum) and *Khongcha* (small drum).

Lhemlhei: *Lhemlhei* is a peculiar mouth instrument. It is a Kuki indigenous musical instrument played by the women folk. It is made up of a piece of brass plates. A stripe of brass is made hollowed near the basal end. A string made of thread is inserted in it. A smaller piece is curved out in the middle of the stripe in such a way that except the basal part, the other sides are free from attachment to the main part. Another hole is made at the

end of the middle piece and the string is inserted in it. This allows the vibration movement of the inner piece when it is pulled through the string. The random movement of the vibrating piece is converted into desirable sound by the tongue and the mouth.¹⁴

Pengkul (Sumkon): It is an indigenous traditional trumpet of the Thadou-Kukis. It is made of rare species of bamboo called *Gotha*, and a mithun horn fixed at the one end through which the sound comes out when blown from the other end. In olden days this instrument was used as a bell or time table for the villagers which include time to rise, time to go to the field, time to return from field and time to rest. It was also used to welcome important persons and chiefs.¹⁵ Today it is used to welcome important persons such as Chief Guests etc at festivals and other important functions.

Goshem: *Goshem* is a bagpipe. It is very important indigenous musical instrument played mainly by the men folk. It is made of a combination of gourd and seven bamboo tubes. Seven pieces of hollow bamboo reeds of various lengths are inserted into the gourd; one, to serve as a mouthpiece, and the others, which are of various lengths, have small holes cut in them. The bamboo reeds are fixed with wax to one side of the gourd in two rows-four bamboo reeds horizontally in the front and three vertically in the rear. The instrument is played by inhaling and exhaling. It produces seven different sounds while inhaling and another seven sounds while exhaling.

Theile: *Theile* is an indigenous flute made up of bamboo tube. It has six holes. It has a base hole bigger than the rest, which is used for blowing; and the rest is used for

¹⁴ Arunkumar and Thouthang. 'The Chongthus', p. 149.

¹⁵ Arunkumar and Thouthang. 'The Chongthus', p. 151.

controlling the sound so as to produce different tunes. Theile was commonly used by the boys in wooing the girls in olden days.¹⁶

Pheiphit: *Pheiphit* is a peculiar indigenous whistle. It is made of bamboo tube. In earlier days, when a big wild animal is killed in a game, a group of men played this musical instrument to welcome the hunters. It is also used for performing *Sagolkengka* dance.

Selangdah: *Selangdah* or guitar is the only stringed musical instrument used. This has been in use from generations. It is made of typical wood called *Vongthing*. It consists of four to six strings and is widely used for singing the modern song.¹⁷

Song

The Thadou have variety of traditional folk songs base on different theme and tunes. They are: *Lapi*, *Lakoila*, *Khunsumla*, *Joldeila*, *La chom la*, *Lamla*, *Moulhahla*, *Salula*, *Sa-ai la*, *Chang-ai la*, *Lamselkaila*, *Khongchoi la*, *Haan la*, *Hat la*, *Thi la* etc. Each of these songs has different denotation sung depending on occasion and festival.

Dance

The name of few folk dances of the Thadou is: *Suhta Lam*, *Vakol Lam*, *Gosem Lam*, *Sagolpheikhai Lam*, *Saipikhupsuh Lam*, *Salu Lam*, *Lam valkol*, *Lachom Lam* etc. Each of these dances is accompanied by different music. Some dances are without songs like *Gosem lam* and *Suhta lam*. Such dances are performed by using musical instrument to

¹⁶ Arunkumar and Thouthang. 'The Chongthus', p. 151.

¹⁷ Arunkumar and Thouthang. 'The Chongthus', p. 152.

keep the rhythm. In all the different types of dances, both males and females dance together. Each of the dances has different meaning performed on special occasions.

Festival

Celebrated on 1st November every year, Chavang Kut is an important festival of Kuki-Chin-Mizo groups of Manipur. It is a post-harvest festival celebrated with great importance in honour of giver for the harvest. The festival highlights rich cultural tradition of the people. People come together dressed in their best traditional attire. They perform various traditional dances to the tune of their traditional musical instruments and songs. The main highlights of Kut festival are Miss Kut (a beauty pageant) and announcement of *Kut Pa* (usually male elder with outstanding personality). It is during Kut festival that traditional cultural legacy like traditional occasional dresses, songs, dances and musical instruments have their importance.

Religion

Traditionally the Thadou were non-Christian. However due to the coming of British and American Missionaries during later part of the 20th century, many converted to Christianity. Now majority of Thadou-Kukis now are Christian, with different denominations many of them who now served as evangelists and pastors, ministering even abroad. A small group of them are also Judaism who believes that they are the lost tribe of Israel. Following table represent number of household under denomination in the study villages:

Table 6.10
Distribution of religious denomination

Sl. No.	Denomination	Motbung	T.Moulbung	Chalva	Govajang	Saikul	Bolkot	Total
1	Protestant	39 (78.0)	47 (94.0)	44 (88.0)	50 (100)	41 (82.0)	45 (90.0)	266 (88.66)
2	Catholic	4 (8.0)	–	–	–	5 (10.0)	–	9 (3.0)
3	Judaism	7 (14.0)	3 (6.0)	6 (12)	–	4 (8.0)	5 (10.0)	25 (8.33)
Total		50	50	50	50	50	50	300

The table shows that most households in six villages, 88.66 % belong to Protestant denomination while very few households are Catholic and Judaism. Though Catholic Church is largest Christian denomination in the world, most Thadou of Manipur belongs to Protestant denomination especially Baptist. Within Protestant there existed various congregations like Baptist, Fundamental, Pentecostal, Evangelical and Methodist etc. Of these, the most numerous and popular is Baptist.

Rites of Passage

The life circle of traditional Thadou from birth to death is marked by performing certain rituals, sacrifices and socio-religious ceremonies, performed in different stages of life. However with the change of time and Christianity in their life, their life circle rituals are now in a constant process of change. To highlight social life of Thadou attempt is made in following paras to describe some rituals which they still followed and practiced with regard to birth, marriages and death. These are marked by various taboos, rituals and socio-religious activities performed at different stages of life.

Birth Ritual

Naodop-an: After a few days of a child birth, feast called *Naodop-an* is performed inviting all those who helped in the delivery including the midwife. This ceremony is performed to give gratitude to those who help in delivery and to thank God for save delivery of a healthy child. A deacon from village is invited to pray for the well-being of mother and child. Well to do families, sometimes observe the ceremony with a grand feast- inviting all relatives, friends and neighbours. This is usually done in case of first born son or daughter or with birth of a son or a daughter after begetting many daughters or sons.

Naominsah: This feast is followed by naming ceremony called *Naominsah*. It is customary law for Thadou to coin name from last syllable of grandparent from either of the parents.¹⁸ When a child is named, last syllable of person whom it is going to be name after is taken as first syllable of the child. Example: if the person whom child is going to be named after is *Hengoumang*, then child name has to start with *Mang*. Thadous name first born son after his paternal grandfather and first born daughter after paternal grandmother. Similarly second born son is named after maternal grandfather and second born daughter is named after maternal grandmother. After which the child can be named after close relative or friend. This naming custom is an important feature of Thadou society. It strengthens bond between two families united by marriage.

Naopui: Literally means blessing ceremony. There are two category of *Naopui*; one is performed in Church and another at maternal uncle house. As soon as the child got his/her name, he/she is then taken to the Church for blessing ceremony performed by

¹⁸ Goswami. 'Kuki Life and Lore', p. 3.

pastor of Church. It is the most important ceremony because through this ceremony child earns membership of Church and village. On this day, the Church issues a birth certificate wherein are inscripted the name of the child along with day he/she was born and countersigned by Pastor. The certificated ensures a lifelong warranty where even in times of death it plays an important role. No person can be buried in the village cemetery without having taken membership to the Church and the Village.

Another important ritual also known as Naopui involving childhood life is the blessing ceremony done by maternal uncle. The child family along with their Tucha and Becha fixed a day when they would go to maternal uncle house to seek their blessing. They normally take with them a shawl known as *Naopuipon* for maternal uncle. Besides they also take money, big pots, blanket and wrap-round for maternal aunty etc. depending on their own will. On the fixed day, when they arrived at the maternal uncle's house, Tucha and Becha who accompanied them makes tea and declares purpose of their visit. The maternal uncle after a few days fixed day for ceremony. On this day, the maternal uncle kill pigs, cows etc. and invite close relatives and friend to participate in the ceremony. The most important part is blessing ceremony performed by the Minister usually Deacon or Pastor of village. After ceremony, the maternal uncle gives them *Sahab* (half part of the pig killed) along with various kinds of gifts to his Tute (daughter's children).

Naobilvu: In earlier days, ear piercing of both boys and girls was a common practice. The child's ear is pierced using a porcupine quill¹⁹ after three month or so after birth. It is a simple ceremony where any person from the family with experience can pierce the ear. The most common type of earring is the traditional rare beads of red colour where white

¹⁹ Carey and Tuck. 'The Chin Hills', p. 191.

thread is push through the hole. Ear piercing is given special place in the traditional Thadou-Kuki society with the belief that evil spirit does not want people with any deformities. People with physical deformities are also believed to be unfit for sacrificial purposes. However, this practice has also been abandoned. Girls normally pierce their ear. There is no fixed time for ear piercing and no formal ceremony is observed. They can wear any types of earrings whether made of gold, silver, metal and any type of their choice as long as they can afford it. There is no exception that ear piercing is restricted only for girls. Stubborn and disobedience son's ear are still pierced with the belief that they will become meek like girl. Some well to do families pierce their son's ear with gold as practiced by the Meiteis.

Marriage Ceremony

Marriage is part and parcel of every society. Among Thadou, various types of marriages are found as already discussed above. But two most common form of marriage found today is marriage by negotiation and marriage by elopement. Various custom, ceremonies and conditions are followed to get social sanction. Marriage by negotiation include preferential type of marrying one's mother's brother's daughter marriage (MBD), and also love marriage with consent and permission of both parents. This type of marriage is commonly called arrange marriage. In this type of marriage certain rules and custom have to be followed.

Moudoh: *Moudoh* literally means asking bride hand in marriage. In negotiated marriage whether that of mother's brother's daughter (MBD) or love marriage or marriage arrange

by parent, boy parents took initiative. They along with their Tucha , Becha and relatives go to girl's parent to seek girl hand for marriage. If proposal is accepted they fix date for further negotiation. During second visit, bride price is fixed. Then followed by another visit where girl's family kills a pig called *Sumtansa* and accepted bride price consisting of traditional shawl for every male members and wrap round for every female member of girl family including Tucha and Becha. Then girl family fixes date for send-off ceremony of their daughter. Bride price varies depending on clan. However, it usually consist of full grown female mithun having already given birth once or twice called *Manlamkai* (leading bride price), *Lutom-Laisui* (black traditional shawl called *Saipikhup* meant for girl's father and black wrap round called *Khamtang* for girl's mother), *Dahpi* (big gong), *Dahbu* (small gong) *Khichong*(rare traditional necklace of red beads), *Khichang* (rare big bead from traditional necklace). Today, due to scarcity of these items it is sometimes paid in cash. Among Thadou, paternal uncle, that is, father's elder brother takes responsibility with regard to marriage of first daughter of his younger brother. Marriage proposal, bride price, send-off ceremony are done by him at his residence and in accordance with his will.

Goul-lhah: *Goul-lhah* literally means sending off ceremony of bride. It is a farewell feast organised by girl's family where they invite relatives, friends, neighbours and close friend of the bride to join in the occasion. After feast, groom family takes the bride with them along with half portion of the pig killed, and congratulatory gifts given by friends, relatives and neighbours and gifts called *Thilken* ' mainly prepared by the bride family. *Thilken* (gift) depends on the economic condition of bride's family. There is no fixed custom regarding this. Well to do family almost gift anything that is enough to establish

or maintain a family especially if the groom is not the first born, because it is customary for younger son to live separate after marriage.

Moulop: Moulop literally means Holy Matrimony. Actual marriage took place after the next day of ‘sending off ceremony’ of bride in the Church to get social recognition and God’s blessing. It is in Church that oath taking and swearing of life time commitment before God is made under guidance of Pastor. The whole village is invited in Church ceremony. After programmed is over, groom side offer light refreshment to all who participated in the service. Marriage party then goes to groom’s house where a reception programmed is held. In this programme, groom family’s close relative including uncle, aunt, head clan leaders and any elder person from groom side offer their congratulation and blessed couple to have a healthy male child as soon as possible. Groom side arranged feast for invitees on this day. Well to do family, especially if they are happy with union of couple, invites whole village. This can however happen only in small villages.

Kituineh: In order to enable newly married girl to go and have food, drink water and other things at her parental house *Kituineh* is performed by bride family after one week or so. It is a small ceremony where bride family kills a fowl or a pig inviting groom family and some close relative. Until this ritual is performed, girl cannot even take water nor visit her natal home. This is the last and one important ritual with regard to Thadou-Kuki marriage system.

Marriage by elopement

In case of marriage by elopement, boy's parent after learning that their son had eloped with a girl takes initiative to inform girl's family. They along with their Tucha and Becha take a pot of tea to the girl's family. Then Becha from boy side announces that they are responsible for mistake done by their son and ask apology, begging them to give them their daughter's hand in marriage to boy. If girl's parent agrees, bride price is fixed with another day for further negotiation. If girl's family is not in favour of marriage, they did not even allow the boy's family to neither enter their house nor drink the tea they brought. In most cases, they demand their daughter to be bought back to their home. In such cases, boy's family kills a pig to show humble submission and to please girl's family; this is followed by many rounds of pleading and begging from boy's mother and father with Becha until they comply. Then girl family fixes bride price to be given within a specified time (this is done to show their reluctant agreement to marriage). Bride price is normally same with that of arrange marriage. If girl happens to marry ahead of her sister than boy family is fined with one more mithun (presently replace by *Khamtang* a traditional wrap round) called *Unu-Dalhah Man*. At fixed date, boy's family along with their Tucha and Becha and relatives comes again bringing with them fixed bride price with a pot of tea. Then girl family fixes another date for a ceremony called *Ki-In-Lut* where they arrange gifts of various kinds depending on their means and also killing pigs, cow, fowls etc. Until this ceremony is performed, girl cannot enter her natal home nor can she take food and drink. The most important part of the ceremony is performed by Pastor of Church where he deliver sermon based on marriage life after which he prays for couple's well being asking forgiveness to God for their wrong conduct of marrying

against God's word and against family's consent. Ceremony is then followed by feeding of the invitees, after which boy's family along with girl return home with all gifts and half portion of pig killed.

Bride Price

In any types of marriage, whether marriage by negotiation or marriage by elopement, bride price has an underlying social importance and varies according to clans. The highest bride price is that of *Singson* girls which comes to 30 mithuns (*Selsomthum*) along with 1 big gong (*Dahpi*), 1 small gong (*Dah buh*), rare red bead necklaces (*Khichong*), and rare ear beads (*Khichang*) besides traditional shawl and wrap round, next is that of the *Sitlhou* girls priced at 10 mithuns while that of other clans amount to 7 mithun each along with the other items mentioned above. However, due to scarcity of mithun and other traditional items like *Dahpi*, *Dahbuh* and *Khichong*, *Khichang*, most of bride price is paid in cash along with variety of traditional shawl and wrap round. But, full grown buffalo which have already given birth twice or more to replace mithun as *Man Lamkai* (principle bride price) is compulsory. In cases where one cannot procure a full grown buffalo with calf, one has to give money amounting to price of buffalo. Beside *Lutom* a black shawl called *Saipikhup* meant for girl's father and *Laisui* black wrap round called *Khamtang* for girl's mother is also compulsory in recognition of their importance as a family head and as a responsible mother for giving birth to her children. This has become normal bride price for all the clans. Traditionally, in all cases half part of bride price is always kept due which is payable only after her death. Besides, bride price, a man also has to pay price if he divorce his wife whether he may be at fault or not. In the past

he is usually find one mithun but today this has been replaced by cash. However, if girl is at fault, her family also has to return all bride price except *Sumtansa* (a pig killed by girl family the day bride price is paid).

Death Ritual

Death among Thadou-Kuki can broadly be divided into two: (1) *Thi-Pha* or natural death (2)) *Thi-sie* or unnatural death.

***Thi-Pha* (Natural death):** Natural death includes death cause by sickness and old age. During pre-Christian day, there has been certain perception regarding cause of diseases and death. The most popular belief was that, death is associated to be work of evil spirit which is belief to have dwelled everywhere. According to T.S. Gangte when a person dies, messengers known as *Thijinkou* are sent to inform relatives and friends. After which an act known as *Kitom* (blaming *Thilhas* for death) was performed to express their grief and anger to *Thilhas* (evil spirit) who are belief to be responsible for death. Male members stamp on floor with great force and shout challenging *thilhas* who are still believed to be still hovering around. They then jumped vigorously brandishing their doas, axe and other weapons including firearm and whatever is in their hand with intention of harming invisible evil spirit. Some performers even make mention of names of father, grandfather and great grandfather of dead person, eulogising them as well as deceased and challenging *Thilhas* saying that latter would not be able to have an easy hand-over of

deceased in land of death called *Mithikho*.²⁰ Then they would challenge invisible Thilhas' to come and fight with him.

Burial for this type of death vary from person to person depending on the social position he held during his life time. On day of burial, a funeral rite called *Kosa* is performed by killing a pig or Mithun to feed all guests who came to participate in the funeral. The head of animals killed is then used to adorn deceased grave along with other number of wild animals he had killed in his time. In all case of natural death corpses were buried in burial ground within the village.

Thi-Se (Unnatural Death): In earlier day's unnatural death like drowning, murdered, suicide, etc. is not given get proper funeral rites. They believe that such person never reaches *Mithikho* (village of death) and they are buried without any ceremony because their soul is already condemned. Such dead bodies are buried outside village to avoid further misfortune. After corpse of an unnatural death is buried, *Inn-theh*, a rite for purification of house is performed, by *Kho-Thempu* (village priest). Similarly if a stranger dies in a particular house, his next of kinsman must perform house purification rite in house where stranger died. This tradition is called *Inbohman*.²¹

However, with Christianity such belief and practice are changed to certain extent. Thadou follows and adheres to common burial ground and equal ceremony for all types of death. Traditional custom of Kitom in times of death (blaming Thilhas for death) is no more in practice. Today, if a person dies in morning, she/he gets buried on the same day itself,

²⁰ Gangte. 'The Kukis of Manipur', p.108.

²¹ Hethang Haokip. 2009. 'Religious Rites and Ceremonies: A Case Study of the Thado- Kukis', www.jneis.com (assessed on 17 August 2013).

whereas, if anybody dies in evening, the person is buried next day as per Christian service. *Kosa* (funeral feast) is still in practice and is performed after two or three day of death of a person.

Longman

One outstanding social value of Thadou-Kuki is customary practice of claiming *Longman* (death price) on death of married women and death of each of her son by nearest male relative. This practice signifies importance of women in patriarchal Thadou society where one is reminded that every woman has her own set of relatives. To ensure good relationship with his wife a part of bride price is always kept as due by girl's family. Claimant of Longman kills a pig after death of their sister or nephew demanding death price in form of mithun. In some cases if wife's relative is not satisfied with such service or treatment of their sister, relatives of woman perform *Sa-KengKhai* (hanging leg of pig killed) on her death in house of husband demanding remaining bride price. However, Longman is not claimable on death of women who has no male issue and on first death on family known as *Chalam*.

Conclusion

Thadou society is predominantly patriarchal, patrilocal, and patrilineal where rule of primogeniture is strictly followed. Monogamy, cross cousin marriage, sororate, levirate, marriage by elopement, marriage by negotiation, bride price is some important aspect of marriage. They recognise each other by usage of classificatory term in addressing relative

and clan member from both parent's side. They have their own varied traditional costume separate for man and woman, musical instrument, song and dance. Their life circle ceremony enriched with age old traditional practice which are presently in accord with Christian belief. But in reality Thadou socio-cultural life is at stake and further getting endangered owing to various overt and covert factors now seen growing in the entire region.