

Chapter-1

Introduction

Liangmai is one of the constituent tribe of Zeliangrong within the generic term called “Naga”. The term Zeliangrong consists of Zeme, Liangmai and Rongmei that was coined on 15th February 1947 at the Keishamthong, Imphal Conference. This is the combination of the first syllable of the three tribes, i.e: Ze from Zeme, Liang from Liangmai and Rong from Rongmei (Ze+Liang+Rong=Zeliangrong). It is a name of an organization formed by the fusion of these three tribes scattered in Manipur and Nagaland. Like many other Naga tribes, Zeliangrong belongs to Tibeto-Burman language family. The vast majorities of Liangmai groups are agriculturist and still live in villages. As their village is on the top of the hill, it provides a proper habitat for cultivation. They mostly practice shifting cultivation also called *pamlou* in Manipuri. Liangmai are one of the most colourful tribe of North East, in terms of the way they have managed to retain a lot of their old ways, customs and social life.

Liangmai belongs to the mongoloid group of race and speak the Tibeto-Burman languages. Liangmai language is one of the 33 languages recognized by the Government of Manipur. According to Grierson LSI (1903) classified Liangmai under the Kuki-Chin- Naga sub-group of the Tibeto Burman family. Liangmai is spoken in Tamenglong Headquater, Tousem and Tamei Sub-division also found in Senapati District i.e. Kangpokpi, Supermania and Tadubi of Manipur. They are also found in Nagaland State particularly in Tening Sub-division, Jalukie, Peren, Dimapur and Kohima. Liangmai and Zeme are referred to collectively as Zeliang in Nagaland. This language is linguistically closer to Maram, Poumai, Ruangmei and Zeme which are spoken in same region.

There is no evidence of existence of writing system among the Liangmai’s in the past. However, they have a very rich oral tradition. Their history, songs, sayings, chants were handed down from generation to generation orally. Liangmai religion was traditionally animism; however they have converted to Christianity even before India’s independence and it is due to the influence of the Christian missionaries.

It was the Britishers, who first introduce the system of education and writing to the Liangmai. According to Rev. N. Mairilungbou, the first school to be set up in Liangmai village was in Longdi Mpa, in 1920, by the British missionaries. That's how education and writing system started among the Liangmai. Liangmai language has been already introduced for teaching till class ten (high school level) in Manipur since January 2014. The script used is the Roman script, which was introduced by the Britishers.

1.1 Origin of Liangmai

Ethnically and linguistically Liangmai belongs to the Tibeto-Burman of southern mongoloid who for a considerable period lived in South-West china and migrated to northern South-East Asia and east India around one thousand year B.C. G.A.Grierson in his Linguistics Survey of India has grouped the Liangmai dialect and language under the naga-bodo sub-family. We do not have exact historical documents to show the migration and origination. However, people have myths and the legends in which they have firm belief that they are factual, but there is no record available in writing. It is believed that the arrival in *Makhel* or *Makhiang* as the place where all the Naga tribes lived together before a major dispersal took place. It is presumable that they spoke one language there. Interestingly, there is similarity in near similar words in various dialects they speak; For instance, the English word for "ten" is "kariu" in Liangmai and "ker" in Angami, then the sepoumaram calls "god" as orah and "man" as omai, while in Liangmai dialect they are respectively chara and chamai. They left *makhel* and come to a deep gorge called *Ramting Kaben* which is now identified in the North-west Senapati district.

The ancestors of Liangmai left their abode in makhel and with their belongings, moved to South. They crossed many mountains and hostile conditions. After long time they reached *Ramting Kaben* where they are comparatively safe. It is said that nothings of the inside could be seen from the outside and those inside did not have the view of the outside except the moon and the star at the night and the sun during the day in a place called *Ramting Kaben*. The *Ramting Kaben* was located at *Makuilongdi* which was commonly called *Guangphungning (chawang Phungning)* somewhere near the present Oklong village.

The people of *Makuilongdi* were seldom sick and the deaths were uncommon. Families increases in number, there was no shortage of food, hunters and fishermen never returned empty handed from their trips they had dances and grandeur. They domesticated animals and fowls. They developed their code of ritual and worship. They began to worship god for good harvest and also for the protection of their lives and general well being. They were theists and believed in the highest god or the supreme god called 'CHARAWANG' which literally means '*God king*'. He is the creator of everything.

All norms and styles of cultivation were developed at *Makuilongdi*. In course of this sojourn, the inherited ancient traditions were improved which became a rich distinct custom, culture and religion compared to those other brethren. Mention may be made that Liangmai community lived there happily without outside interference. There, people use one language in songs and prayer were deep seated. It is said that the members of the houses in *Makuilongdi* reached 7777, due to increase in population the administration become out of control, people in group with their dear and near ones started parting from each other in different groups in different direction according to their own wishes, some to the North-West, some to the North-East and some to the South. They proceeded with their own lives without knowing their destination. The dispersal took place after year within a time frame under the customary law.

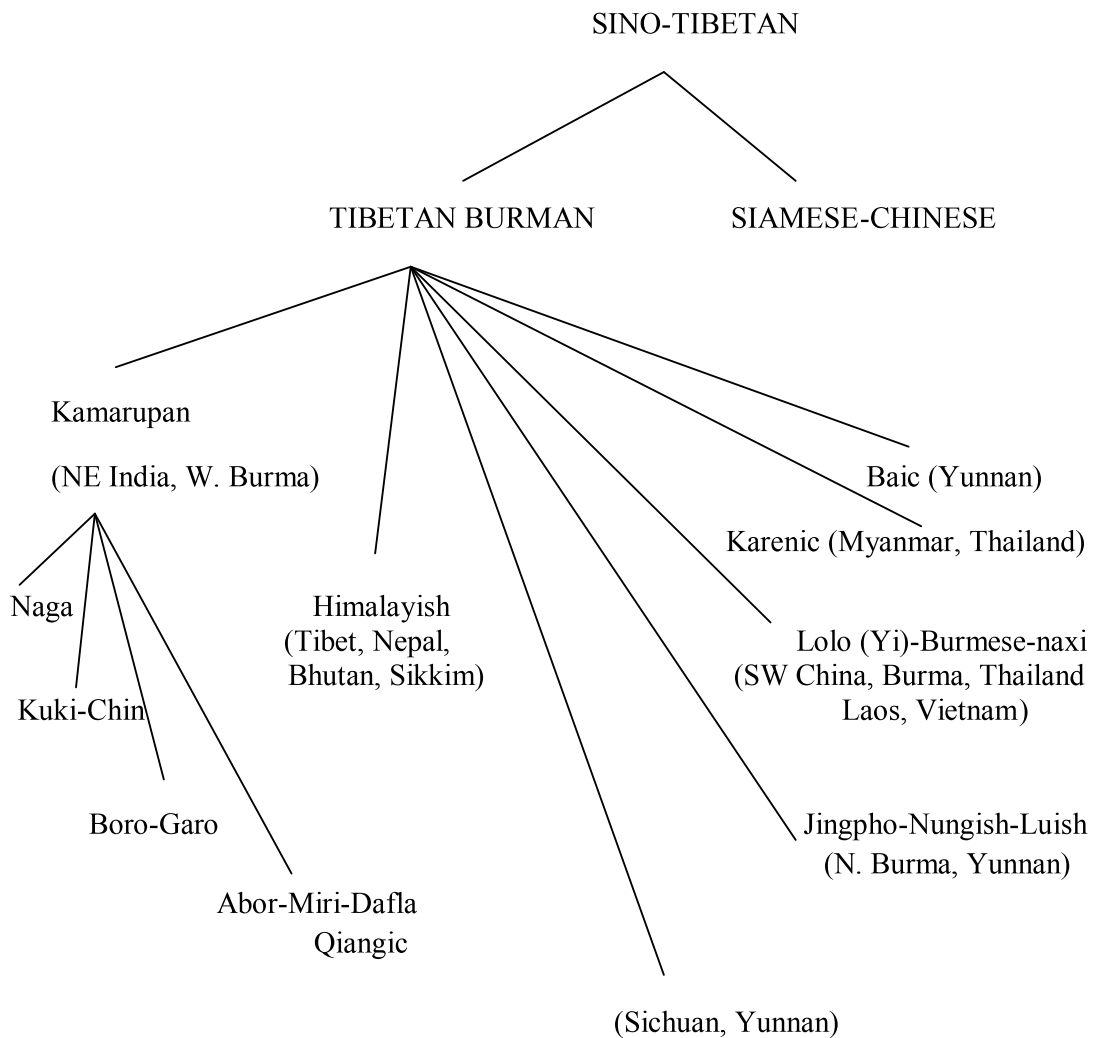
According to one version, during their stay in *Chawangphugning*, *Nguibou* was the king. He had two wives, the first wife bore him two sons called *Kading* and *Rambangbou* and the second wife begot him one son called *Namgangbou*. *Namgangbou* being the first son of the second wife was not eligible to claim the right of chieftainship(to inherit his father)after the death of his father, so he left for the westward of the village along with one sector and occupy the vast expanse of barak valley and haftlong area in Asom. They moved towards plain, so they were known as *Zeme*. *Rambangbou* the second son of the first wife also left towards south with his group and occupy a vast empty land and they were called as Maruagmei (maruang means 'empty' and mei means 'people' in Liangmai). They were now called *Rongmei (kabui)*. The Liangmai called Rongmei as Maruagmei till now. And Kading the first son of the first wife inherit his father and occupy the central position of the village

looking after his father and become the father of Liangmai. As they form one of the sector, they were called *kiliang khatmai* (kylaing means ‘sector in a village’ khat mean ‘one’ and mai mean ‘people’) and from this they were called Liangmai.

1.2 Position of Liangmai within the Tibeto-Burman Family

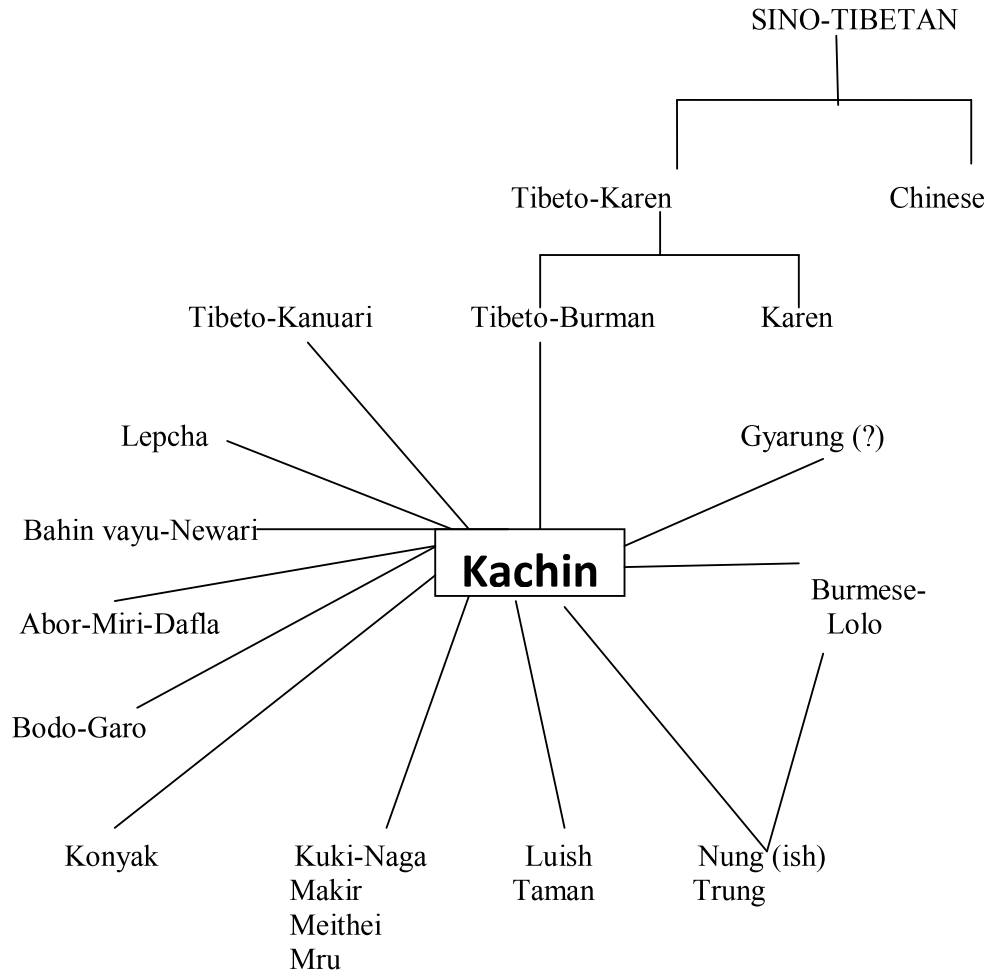
Matisoff (2003) simply club all the languages of Northeast India under Kamarupan which include Naga, Kuki-Chin, Abor-Miri-Dafla and Bodo-Garo subgroups. A schematic diagram of the Sino-Tibetan language family by Matisoff (2003) is given in figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Classification of Sino-Tibetan language by (Matisoff: 2003)



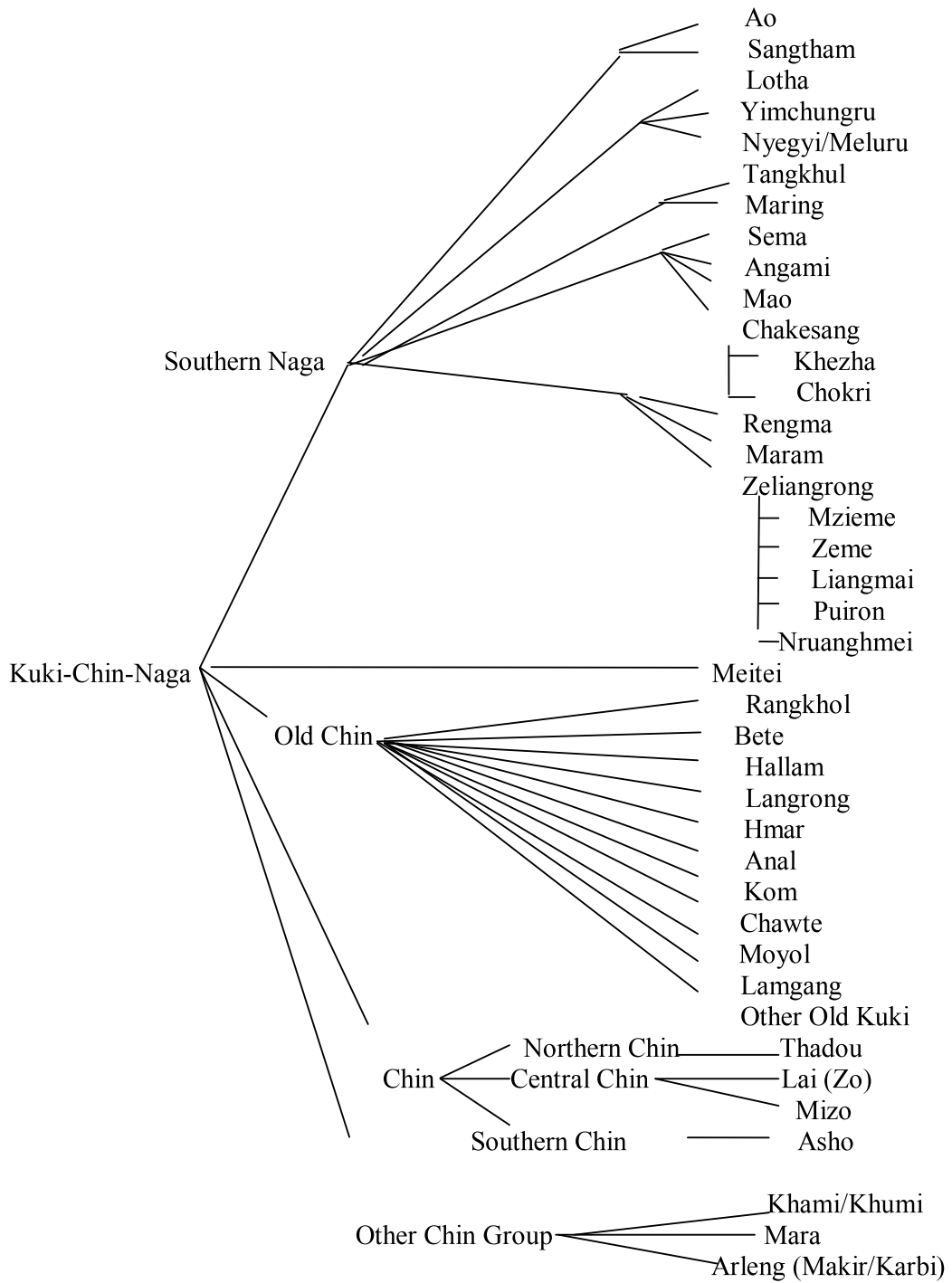
Another classification is proposed by Benedict (1972) which also placed all the Kuki-Naga, Mikir, Meithei and Mru under kachin. The schematic diagram of Sino-Tibetan languages is shown in figure 2 below:

Figure 2. Classification of Sino-Tibetan language by (Benedict: 1972)



Bradley (1997) gives a more detailed picture of Tibetan-Burman languages at the lower level as shown in figure 3 below:

Figure 3. Classification of Sino-Tibetan Language (Bradley 1997)



1.3 Village administration

The administration of the village was carried on in general by the village chief in council; he was responsible for the administration after consulting the village council elders. Traditionally, all the administrative power were vested in him but without the consent of the members of village authorities he was not regarded as the final authority to decide any disputes, theft, quarrel among the villagers. The post of village chief was not hereditary in Liangmai society.

He even had the right to expel any undesirable character from his village. All criminal cases were dealt by chief assisted by this executive or elders in accordance with customary laws. The main function of the village authority are to maintain law and order and perform the duties generally conferred or imposed on the public under the police Act 1961, the village authority is also to review all development works and report to the development committee.

The administration of the village is vested to the persons holding the posts given below:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <i>bəm̄pi or wəŋdi</i> | ‘chairman’ |
| 2. <i>məlin tsəp</i> | ‘vice chairman’ |
| 3. <i>əpai</i> | ‘court’ |
| 4. <i>raosui</i> | ‘secretary’ |
| 5. <i>raolin</i> | ‘joint secretary’ |
| 6. <i>məkhiambo</i> | ‘executive committee’ |
| 7. <i>ləm tsə</i> | ‘authority’ |
| 8. <i>tsəkhiuripao</i> | ‘executive committee’ |

1.4 Law of property inheritance

Liangmai society being patrilineal, the property is inherited by the sons. According to customs, the youngest son inherits the family property and he has to look after his parents. Other sons are also given some share of the properties if the parents are rich enough. In some cases daughters are also given some movable and immovable properties. The movable properties like cow, pigs and immovable includes residential

house plot and cultivable lands. The father of the family before his death or during his life used to divide the properties amongst his sons. The youngest son gets a lion share of the property and treated as their heir and he had to look after his parents.

1.5 Chaga Ngee

This is the biggest and most important festival of the Liangmai community. The word 'Chaga Ngee' means 'festival'. The month of October is called 'Chagahiu'. The word 'Hiu' literally comes from the word 'Chahiu' meaning 'month'. Chagahiu means the month of festival or merriment. It is a festival of purification or sanctification and rededication. According to the ancient account, Chaga Ngee is celebrated after a war where victorious warriors are honored on the day. The occasion is also a day to sanctify the men folks for the next assignment. Old and young of the Liangmai community in traditional attire come out in large number to participate in the Chaga Ngee in every year. Besides organizing numerous traditional sport items on the occasion, traditional menu is an important theme of the Liangmai Chaga Ngee. Earlier, as a preparation of Chaga Ngee, the people of Liangmai go for hunting, fishing, trapping and so on in search of delicious food for this festival and people usually eats only delicious food. During this festival married men and women are used to drink and eat from banana leaves whereas the youth are to eat and drink from bamboo cups and plates. During this festival couples are not allow to sleep together and men are not allowed to touch women to maintain discipline and customary law of Liangmai. If men fail, bad luck follows them in the war. So men folk have to maintain discipline and not to defile themselves from such impurity things.

The festival usually lasts for five days. On the first day, It begins with 'Chami malapbo' means 'making fire' which head of the family comes and collect the fire to start their hearth with firewood for cooking. On this very night they are to make and eat their own choice of food. Second day is the day of 'Npeng phenbo' means 'totem shooting', early in the morning the selfless boys voluntarily go to the jungle to cut thr tree for Npeng (totem). Npeng is cut by those whose parents are still alive and those who live a pure and holy life. They are to go for cutting only after being blessed by their parents. Npeng has to be made in resemblance to human being. Chicken feathers are placed on the head of Npeng and also eye, nose, mouth, aer, neck, hearts and chest

has to be marked with black colour. After everything is done, Npeng is tied on the top of the post. Keeping themselves pure and holy from sexual impurity and with a loud “ho-hoing” proclaiming their forefather’s name, Npeng is shot with an arrow. Certain features are made on the spot where they could hit: if it happens to hit on the head-the enemy die of head pain; if on the neck- the one who shot will have plenty of rice. If on the heart- the enemy will die with much trouble; if on the right chest-the enemy will die in war; and if on the left chest-the one who shot will win many girls. If anyone can’t hit Npeng then the singkupao (priest) will take the Npeng stick (arrow) and put it in the feet of Npeng as a sign of surrender. Those whose relatives died in the year were not to shot Npeng. Day three: the following day was a day of sharing of meals- foods and drinks. Sharing of eating and drinking was followed by singing and dancing. Day four: on this day, all the leftover food and drinks are distributed to the elderly people. The festival is so fascinating that young boys and girls reluctant to end-up the festival would sing: “Chaga bam ni ye” means “Don’t want to end up Chaga festival; we want to continue Chaga”. Day five: this day particularly for the elderly people who continue to drink and eat the leftover food and drinks which were called ganjung or kalumtiubo (eating leftover). Till leftover food was finished up, it was a taboo to do any domestic works. The grand celebration of Chaga will bring more rice, less war and less death in the village. So, the Liangmai considered Chaga as the best and biggest festival.

It is an indigenous festival of Liangmai inhabited in Manipur and Nagaland. Today this festival is celebrated in every year on 30th October in every villages, town and cities where Liangmai reside with cultural showcase and grand feast. However, in the modern context the prime reason of observing this occasion is to keep alive the rich culture and tradition of the tribe.

1.6 Population

According to 2001 census of India the total population of Liangmai in Manipur was 34,232 with 17,477 males and 16,755 females. According to 2011 census report, the total population of Zeliang n Nagaland was 36,012 out of which 2315 are Liangmai speakers.

1.7 Religion

Some said that before the advent of Christianity, the Liangmais were animists. The name of the religion of Liangmai is call 'PUI-PIU RACHENG' "forefather religious" (Rev.N.Mairilungbou in '*Kahiu Puang*' the Liangmai 2000 A.D Celebration Pulication). The Liangmai believe in god called Tinggen Rawang ('tinggen' means 'heaven', 'Ra' means 'god' and 'wang' means 'king'-"heaven god king"). They also worship large stones and woods. They have priest and prophets who performs the offering and sacrifice of animals to appease their god. The Liangmai religion believes in life after death. They believe that their spirits will go to a place call '*Charuidi*' after death. But due to the advents of Christianity, all the Liangmai inhabited in Manipur have embraced Christianity. Now Liangmai have already celebrated their 'Passover celebration' in Tamei in the year 2002. Passover means the conversion of all Liangmai into Christianity, but some of them in Nagaland are yet to be converted.

Religion plays a pivotal role in every society in human history and the Liangmai is no exception. The traditional religious practice of Liangmai in fact controlled each and every aspect of social and religious life in society. The Liangmai fore-fathers believe in superstitions. They believed that all the sufferings in their lives-plagues, famines, storms, earthquake, and all natural calamities were caused by evil spirit to punish them. As a result, they spend whatever they have in order to appease the so-called evil spirits. Thus the role of religion in the traditional Liangmai society was absolute as nobody questioned the authority of the priests in the village. Unfortunately, the traditional religion played more destructive role than constructive one. In reality most of the un-ending inter village conflicts were the direct outcome of the concept of 'revenge' which is deeply rooted in the traditional religious belief. According to this believe, 'revenge is a must' if any relative is killed by the enemy. Revenge must be carried out in order to pleased the spirit of the victim and as well as to preserved the honor and dignity of the family. The tradition also allowed to taking revenge on the relatives of the killer or the culprit in case they victim's (family) failed to take revenge on the killer in person. This concept of revenge directly led to the un-ending popular practiced of head-hunting in the Naga society. The traditional religion thus instead of bringing peace and harmony in the society it become the instrument of

destruction and created hatred and mistrust among the people which we inherit today. (Dr. Hunibou in 'Passover History of Liangmai 2003').

1.8 Socio-Culture

The Liangmais have fine qualities, they are known for their simplicity and hospitality. They are honest, courteous and cheerful. Life in rugged mountains gives them a strong spirit of self-reliance, stealing is unknown; their granaries are kept outside the house or even outside the village. They never locked their doors, only a stuff kept the wind from blowing the door open. They lived a discipline life no one is found violating the norms of the village. They are very conservative people. They do not easily embrace changes and new ways. They strongly hold that their fore- father ways are the best. New method and system of doing things do not appeal to them immediately. The Liangmais have individual and social practices which are unique.

1.9 Dress

Traditionally, man folk wear *tasini* 'cloth worn round his wrist reaching just above his knee'. He also wears *kabiat*, a sash like cloth hanging on the both sides of his shoulders which reaches to the middle of his thigh. His legs were uncovered and bare footed. He wear hornbill feather on his head while dancing. Woman wears *tanynah* (sarong like dress) as their customary clothing. The *tanina* is secured around the waist by a design strap of cloth called *Bungkam*. The upper part of the body is covered with a cloth called *Phengphai* which is worn under the arms and drawn tight over the breast. The head is covered and the hairs are drawn back and let loose. During the festivals dances, the highly value ornaments such as *Kabaitiu*, *Kaluitiu*, *Karimtiu* (all necklaces) *Pikhim* (headgear), *Tabian*, *Talong* and *Chapuanghimta* (all bangles) were worn. However, the modern men and women adopted the western way of dressing in their day to day life. Only on the cultural festivals and during dance, they wear their traditional dresses.

1.10 Occupation

The main occupation of the Liangmai is agriculture and farming. As their village is in the hills it provides a proper habitat for agricultural purposes. They practice shifting cultivation. Their agricultural product includes rice, maize, tea, potato, yam, banana etc.

1.11 Where it is Spoken

Liangmai speakers are found over some part of Manipur and in Nagaland. They occupy an area covering around 50/60 sq kms extending approximately from 24.8 N to 25.7 N latitude and 93 °E to 94 °E longitude. In Manipur Liangmai speakers are found in Tamenglong and Tamei sub-division of Tamenglong District. They are also found in Taning and Jalukie area of Parem District of Nagaland. They are also scattered over Imphal, Kohima and Dimapur. Possibly, there may be a few hundred Liangmai speakers in Assam too (North Cachar district, Haflong).

1.12 Education/Literary

There are various private and government schools in Liangmai villages. The medium of instruction used in school is English. The present literacy rate of Liangmai is about 70% which is ahead of the state average as a whole. The Liangmai language is taught in the Primary and High School level in Manipur. And Nagaland Liangmai language is also taught in primary level. The script used in Liangmai is Roman script.

1.13 Data and Methodology

The data for the present study was collected in several visits to the Liangmai inhabiting areas of Tamenglong District Manipur, mainly from Thalon Village of Tamenglong and Tamei sub-division of Tamenglong District. The method of approach to the acquisition of the data was direct all the time. The data for the present study is based on the primary source, as there is hardly any written material available on this language. However, secondary material like dictionaries, articles and books etc. are also used. The primary method of data collection was direct elicitation and group

discussion. The speech data were collected and recorded from the native speakers for closer observation.

1.14 Organization of the Study

The present work is organized into five chapters. The chapters are

1. Introduction
2. Review of Literature
3. Phonology
4. Morphology
5. Conclusion

The first chapter contains an introduction, origin, migration, position of Liangmai within the Tibeto-Burman family, village administration, law of property inheritance, Chaga Ngee, population, Religion, socio-culture, Dress, occupation, where it is spoken, education and literacy, data and methodology and organisation of the chapter.

The second chapter deals with the literature review, few selected book of Liangmai is used for review as no literature are available which can be used for the purpose of review; The only piece of work on the language is that of LSI, which made mentions of the language as Kwoireng or Lyang. G.A Grierson (1903) described the grammatical sketch of Kwoireng or Lyang in his *Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. III, pt.II*. R.Tale, in his book '*Paphibang*' which means '*in the beginning*' which is published in 1947. Another early work was compilation of poetries by Guisongbou Daimai, which was published under title '*Kadih Rapen Jah*', in 1957. Some Dictionaries, viz., "*The English-Liangmai Sentence Dictionary*" edited by Dee Abonmai 2007, '*The Faringki Liyangmai naga compicamrakeng 2000 Millennial Dictionary*' Compiled by Niumai Lunkingbou RTD.A.I. There are also some hymn, books and Bible "*Old Testament Genesis to New Testament Revelation*" translated by N.K. Sying.

The third chapter deals on phonology of Liangmai, there are twenty consonants, six vowels, nine diphthongs and three tones. Out of 20 consonants phonemes in Liangmai, only six phonemes can occur in all the position, the phonemes which can

occur in all the position are; /p/, /t/ and /k/ in stop series and /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/ in nasal. The phonemes which cannot occur in final position are; /ph/, /b/, /th/, /d/, /ts/, /kh/, /g/, /s/, /z/, /h/, /l/, /r/, /w/ and /y/. Liangmai permits up to two consonant cluster in a syllabic-initial position and medial position, but Liangmai does not permit cluster of consonants in syllable-final position. Occurrence of syllable or word-final position is totally missing in fricative, laterals, trills and semi vowel /w/ and /y/. The vowel /e/ and /o/ are very rare in word-initial positions comparison with the others remaining vowels. Liangmai is an agglutinative language having the characteristics of SOV language. The majority of the monosyllabic words of Liangmai have the CV structure, that is, they are open ended syllables. Three tones viz., high, mid and low which are contrastive to each other but different pitch variation as in /pá/ ‘read’, /pa/ ‘foot print’ and /pà/ ‘he’.

The fourth chapter deals with Morphology of Liangmai in detail. There are three pronominal markers such as- /ə-/first person, /nə-/second person and /pə-/third person. Gender distinction in Liangmai is determined on the natural recognition of sex. Human and animate nouns are referred to as Masculine or feminine genders on the basis of natural sex. For human being [+human – inanimate] in Liangmai is marked by /piu/ ‘male’ and /pui/ ‘female’. And in case of animals, /tsi/ ‘male’ and /pui/ female’, but in case of pigs the suffix -/kiu/ is marked for male and -/ŋee/ for female which haven’t give birth to young one. There are eight case markers in Liangmai. Nominative /-niu/, Accusative/-tu/, Genitive/-gu/, Locative/-k^hu/ /-gə/, /-ləm/, Instrumental /-niu/, Ablative/-gəsu/, /-ləmsu/, Associative/-nai/, /-pənai/ , Dative /-leŋ/. Quantifier in Liangmai are /keŋziu/ ‘many’ /inkiuziu/ ‘more’ /keŋkhə/ ‘much’ /khəŋsia/kəsia/ ‘some’ /pakhian/ ‘all’ /mathiu/ ‘all’ /poina/ ‘little’ etc. Classifier is very rich in Liangmai. Liangmai makes use of classifier for denoting shape, size, physical and state etc. Classifier in Liangmai usually follow the noun and precedes the numeral, for examples -/dan/: This classifier is used for any object which are short but longer than its wide or breadth. An object may be round, flat or in any shape. -/k^həŋ/ it is used after noun to indicate the human being only. -/kaŋ/ indicates any objects which are solid and irregular in shape. -/keŋ/ it indicates that an object is long or short but thin in shape, ropelike structure which are thin. -/muai/ it signifies any things which are in a state of powder. -/poi/ this classifier indicates both animate and inanimate size and age. This classifier ‘poi’ is usually followed by the suffix ‘na’. -/kem/ this

classifier is used to signifies any creepers plant. *-/niaŋ/* this classifier signifies anythings which are in the form of powder or paste. Liangmai personal pronoun differentiates three persons: first person, second person and third person. These three persons can be distinguished into three numbers: singular, dual and plural. The first person singular pronoun is *-i* ‘I’ and opposite of it is *-əliu* ‘we’. There is no question of inclusive or exclusive in the first person plural form. There is also dual form- *əniah, əne, ənai* (*ə*-first personal pronouns, *-nia, -ne* ‘two’). It has also objective singular form: *-ək^hugə* ‘to me’ and *-ək^hu-gəsu* ‘from me’. Liangmai has four negative particles namely- */mək/, /lək/, /ma/* and */dulo/*. The negative marker */mək/* is used in both past and non-past aspect, */lək/* is used only in non past aspect, the negative particle – */ma/* is used in imperative negation. The word always follows the verb and takes the suffix *-/ne/* in the imperative sentence, and */dulo/* is used in lets negation.

The chapter five is conclusion; this chapter sums up the research finding in the preceding chapters to present a comprehensive idea about the language.