Conclusion

The thesis explores the question of ‘land’ in tribal economy with special reference to the Thadou-Kuki groups of the Hill Tribes of Manipur. It tries to posit the issues of land and identity of the Thadou-Kukis within the bigger debates of colonialism and post-colonial theory, which is relevant to most post-colonial societies of the world. It can also be construed as a study of an agricultural society’s interface with modernization and the modes of adjustments and conflicts that arise due to changes caused by the impositions of the colonial and post-colonial agencies.

The Thadou-Kukis, as evident from our study, had close bonding with nature and they allowed it to influence their socio-cultural lives. The ecology influences the cultural constitution of the society as well as the relations within the social structure. The society was predominantly an agricultural as well as a hunter-gatherer society with ownership of land as a collective enterprise. They had high degree of respect for the environment, which sustains them. The fact that it is valued is signified by the proof that agriculture is highly ritualised. The concept of ‘reciprocity’ determines their relationship with nature, which is one of mutual respect and consideration for the other living organisms in the cosmos. This mark of respect for land is reflected in the socio-cultural lives of the people, which in turn determine the way the society is organised. So, it is not just the culture of humankind influencing the conceptualization of ecological relations but also the influence of nature on the social structure of the society under study.

Their concepts of rights to land and forest of the Thadou-Kukis were governed by the application of their un-codified, un-written laws sponsored by traditions and customs. These customary rules were framed within the background of the understanding that tribal identification centred on territorial affiliation. There emerged the need for protecting their territoriality.
through the establishment of the institution of chieftainship system in the society. I would like to clarify the jurisdiction of autonomy of the Thadou-Kuki chief in the present age. If the whole land in a Thadou-Kuki village belongs to the chief of the village, is there a need for discussing inheritance laws in the society? Should that not be confined only to the chief’s family? The truth is landownership exists under chieftainship system too, but in a form quite different from other land systems. There are different types of proprietors in the village. There are those who procure permanent ownership rights to their land through the chief. This can be of many types. There are minimal percentages of cases in which the chief actually sells the land to the villagers. In addition, some are given rights to the land because they had assisted the chief at the time the village was established. The two types can be termed as permanent ownership in which the landowner can dispose and transfer the land at his free will. Inheritance laws are applicable in the two types. There are also types of landowner who are gifted by the chief. In theory, the land is temporarily owned. The land allotted to them cannot be sold and if the family wishes to migrate to another village, the land will automatically return to the chief. However, this type of ownership assumes a sort of permanency over years of residence. So, inheritance laws can also apply to this one. There are the temporarily allotted sites for Jhum lands or kitchen gardens usually in mountainside or vacant plots of the villages. This type of ownership is temporary and has to be renewed after a period fixed by the chief and the council of ministers. Inheritance laws do not apply to this type. The Thadou-Kuki chief is endowed with “...the rights of management of community resources and in the exercise of this he is authorised by tradition” (Burman, 1992, p. 275).

The colonial administrators and the missionary were equally effective in restructuring space and society. They not only entered their lands, but into their lives and activities as well. Whereas the administrator was influential at a holistic and policymaking level, the influence of the missionary in lieu of
their day-to-day interaction with local inhabitants was significant. Studying the missionary’s influence offers a better potential for analysing the dynamics of intercultural relations in the colonial setting. Following McKim Marriott’s theory of ‘parochialization’, this is a case in which elements from the ‘great tradition’ become confined to particular local ‘little traditions’ (Marriot, 1967). However, it goes beyond Marriot’s theory in that Christianity, as brought forth by the American Baptist Missionaries, is also adjusted to the culture of the society under study.

Both the stipulations of evangelical Christianity and the terms of colonial law contributed in undoing the hierarchies of village life. The greatest impact of colonialism on the Thadou-Kuki society was that they were coerced to a sedentarised mode of existence, which had corresponding affect on their mode of subsistence and agricultural system. The relation between the coloniser and colonised is characterised by ambivalence. The local natives constituted both a useful ally and a competent opponent for the Britishers’ at different points of time. Both the Saidian and Homi Babha theory did not see the interplay between the colonial rulers and the native as a discourse in which the local people were mere passive victims. Similarly, in the case of the Thadou-Kukis, the resistance is evident in incidents of war as the ‘Kuki Uprising (1917-1919)’ and the fight for territorial integrity in the form of demand for autonomy and ‘self-rule’ in the present era.

In defining the socio-spatial categories, Evans-Pritchard (1969) concept of ‘structural distance’ says a homogenised community becomes possible through a common cultural identity that transcends space and time. The policy of Col. McCulloch in the 19th century of settling the Kukis along exposed frontiers and using them as buffers against fractious tribes has a lasting impact today. They are today found settled in scattered pattern all over Manipur hills as well as in Nagaland, Myanmar (Burma) and Chittagong.
Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. This has created problems today in uniting a group of people who otherwise have common language, culture, origin and history and constitute the largest tribe in terms of population in Manipur. Liisa Malkki (1992), while not denying the importance of place in the construction of identities, has posited that 'determinitalization' and 'identity' are intimately linked. We find cases in our field like the various homeland movements, which today in Manipur context has been reduced to a demand for a separate district based on cultural sameness. The "...traditional linkage with the geographical settings through the generations has provided them the specific mentality to think themselves owner of the land concerned" (Sarkar, 2006, p. 8).

Another policy of the colonial administrator that led to alienation of land was the policy of indirect rule. The administration before the anti-colonial war was indifferent to the cause and needs of the Hill population. There was never any representative from the hill areas of Manipur. Though the amendments made in the administration after the 'Kuki Uprising' (1917-1919) was made with the aim of curtailing the liberties of the hill people, it actually recognised their existence as equal proprietors of a defined territory. After 1947, the administration of the Hill areas passed on from the colonial rulers to the Maharaja of Manipur and finally to the state agencies under the Indian Government. The State agencies in making laws for the Hill areas have continued the same mistake committed by the colonial rulers, which is an imposition of laws without consideration for the ruled. Subsequently, various Acts were passed for the administration of the hill areas. They were indirect attempts to slowly erode the land ownership of the hill tribes of Manipur as also of the Thadou-Kukis in the name of a uniform land policy. The traditional linkage with land also started losing its effectiveness and meanings.
The land rights discourses in the post-independent era do not paint a very different picture. They are a continuation of the colonial policies towards the hill tribes of Manipur and, are therefore, without genuine consideration and understanding of the governed. The Manipur Hill Peoples Administration Regulation Act-1947 reduced many chiefs of smaller villages with less than 20 tax-paying houses as unrecognised chief. For the rest of the chiefs who qualified the new criteria for a village, a new hierarchy of official control overshadowed the real basis of traditional administration. There were attempts to do away with the traditional tributary privileges of the chief. The state agencies likened the chiefs to be like the zamindars in mainland India and presumed their ruling to be dictatorial in nature. The Manipur Village Authorities in Hill Areas Act-1956 continued the onslaught by reducing the chief of the village that accepts the Act as ex-officio Chairman of the village authority. Moreover, the other traditional councillors' post was no longer hereditary and they had to be re-elected to continue in the post. The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reform Act of 1960 was an ambiguous one. On the one hand, it had provisions for protecting the land rights of the tribals like the section 158 which prohibits transmission of land to non-tribals and subsection 2 (1) which excludes the hill areas from the MLR & LR Act. On the other hand, in the six and seventh amendments of the same Act attempted to remove and modify the very section that favoured the hill people. Moreover, there are no laws to protect those villages, which are in close proximity to the valley districts. The ongoing overlapping land issues and dual taxation of the villages that fall within these areas are examples of the need for laws to protect them.

The Manipur Hill Areas District Council Act, 1971 has been widely criticised because it does not provide legislative and financial powers. Consequently, the Sixth Schedule, which is supposed to provide these powers is demanded by the people. In making land laws, reforms and its implementations, there is
a need for the participation of the people for whom the law is meant is crucial for the formulation of appropriate laws to suit them. Similarly, the hill tribes have made demands in the form of protest and negotiations with the state. The demand put forward by the people has been for a separate land law that respect the customs and cultures of the locale and enables a 'real' self-rule in the hills of Manipur. The community is, therefore, a part of the "...ongoing struggles for new forms of democracy in the guise of a return to custom" (Sundar, 2005, p. 4430).

Jhumming is very central to the cultural lore of the people and is interlinked with many other institutions in the society like the chieftainship system, priest-hood system as well as the traditional belief system and worldview of the society. Besides, the restriction on jhumming as a mode of production system, the villagers' access to forest was curtailed by the various forest policies issued by the state. The main purpose of these acts, as it was first initiated by Governor General Dalhousie in 1865, was for forest conservation, management and preservation. However, this restraint the movements of the local people and as the rules became more stringent with each new Acts and amendments, finally alienated them from the forest. For instance, the Indian Forest Bill of 1980 prescribes severe punishments for forest offences.

Situating the issue in the context of the field areas in Tujang Vaichong and Motbung, the chief and the council of ministers have incorporated the land laws of the National Forest policies into the local laws of the villages. The area that comes under 'reserved area' is exclusively under the control of the forest department in both the villages. There are some areas of the forest marked out as 'open reserve area', which is opened to the villagers by the chief for various forms of agricultural activities or for cutting woods, after they formally seek permission. The 'protected area' is strictly protected by the chief in both the villages. So, the villagers, most of whom are dependent on agriculture as a means of survival, have nearly no access to the forest resources as their rights
to it are governed by a two-fold system: primarily by the system of chieftainship and secondly by the policies of the state. The site of jhumming in Kangpokpi is the mountain called *T.Khullien Moul* (Mountain). The mountain is the source of sustenance for the population as it is a thriving town and is over-populated, and therefore, lacks space for cultivation. If jhumming is done away with, the state agencies need to provide an alternative.

Inequality and marginalisation do not occur only in the public spheres of the society, but also within the domestic spheres in which women are further marginalised. The stringent laws of customary norms further aggravate the denial of land rights within the family where a certain section is marginalised. These customary laws are authorised with the duty of public administration and the control and management of their land and forests. Women in the Thadou-Kuki society are twice alienated from the possibility of land right. First, the rights to land of any individual or all villagers in the village are through the chief. Secondly, as per the customary norms, it is the man who is preferred for allocation of land. It is also the man who is usually in leadership and who is attributed the authority to decide who and how much should be allotted to a person. Then, in the household and within the domestic sphere, women are further sidelined in favour of the male members of the family. In analysing, the influence of the missionary women in changing the structure of gender relations within the household and community, religion represents a paradoxical emancipation. Emancipation exists to a certain extent, as it provides a space for women outside the domestic domain, but this does not mean their overall empowerment. The authority does not really influence upon the village administration in which their access to land is determined. The changes in women discrimination in inheritance laws could only bring forth by the customary law court with the support of the church.

Finally, the agrarian society's interface with modernization is best understood in the chapter on the issue of 'livelihood' where land is studied as a
productive entity. The nearness to the National Highway 39 to Motbung and Kangpokpi enables better means of transport and communication, which means seeping in of the rubrics of globalisation like marketization, commercialisation and monetization. This is evident in the way Tujang Vaichong compared to the other two is more grounded in traditional values and has lesser access to facilities of development. The village is far away from the National Highway and is another 40 kilometres away from it. Kangpokpi, as an emerging town, is valued higher because of the presence of modern amenities like education system and government offices. Therefore, there is rural to urban migration towards the town, and as a result, the town is over populated. Occupation is also highly diversified.

The greatest changes and impact of capitalism is witnessed in the labour system. The Chanyonavian model of classical model of peasant society of pure peasant family farms is no longer relevant today. The space for labour has changed. It becomes a buyable commodity and is ‘commoditised’ to use the Marxian term. It is no longer the bonds of kinship, operative through families of clans and kindred, which govern production and distribution. There is a replacement of family or communal labour for hired or waged labour. It is no longer an activity done through group cooperation, but more of an individualistic activity. ‘Lom Kijoh’, meaning the selling of one’s labour is a case to prove the point. We see the gradual commodification of labour from being a co-operative enterprise to a contractual form.

The dependency on agriculture and the pressure on land are lessened by occupational diversification even in villages. There is a move towards the tertiary sector. Most household in contemporary rural societies live from a mixture of livelihood strategies. There is a shift towards non-farm enterprises in villages, including villagers moving out of the villages to urban town to seek for better employment prospects. Therefore, there is increasing proletarisation of agriculture from farm labour to other modes of livelihood. Geertz concept of ‘involution’ is relevant to explain how the local people
experiment with alternative occupations other than farming while still holding on to cultivation. There is transformation to new patterns of development without letting go the time-honoured dependence on agriculture; as a result, the society becomes internally more complicated.

In discussing the relationship between 'Land' and 'Identity' in the society, the scope of the study encompasses both 'Geographical Territory' and 'Cultural Territory'. We see the external factors to the society in the form of colonialism and the post-colonial state resulting in restructuring of the society, both in terms of geographical relocation as also in the ideological and cultural reconstitution. The two are interdependent as geographical restructuring is always followed by ideological revolution. Changes in land relation cause redefinition of identity not necessarily only because of the physical change in the landscape or land structure, but because of ideological changes that accompanies the factors of changes. Therefore, identity as Malkki (1992) had said, "...is always mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories, et cetera."