Acknowledgements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I am grateful to Mr. Luntinsat Kipgen, Mr. Letkhomang Haokip and Ngamkholen Haokip for offering ready assistance whenever I needed clarification on cultural terminologies and materials and folkloric beliefs. I thank Mr. Nehginpao Kipgen for taking time out to carefully proof-read the chapters of my thesis, check the referencing and for offering critical comments. I thank my fellow scholars (L) Jimmy Jamkhomang Haokip, Dr. Jangkhomang Guite, Mr. Ronald Thangeo, Mr. Ngamminlun Kipgen, Mr. Don Morgan Kipgen, Dr. Shimreiyung Awungsi and Mr. Ngamjahao Kipgen for sharing valuable ideas and materials on my area of study.
There were people who made this journey easier with words of encouragement. I appreciate Ms. Sanjeevini Badigar and Dr. John Thomas for the time of discourse on theoretical materials and its application when I was unable to understand them on my own. I am grateful to my special extended family, the JNU-KWS prayer cell members for the moral support they have rendered to me during the trying years.

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

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