CHAPTER 1

Mapping of the Region, People and Culture

1. 1 Introduction

The Chapter describes the social profile and the land system of the society under study in order to make it easier for analysis in the subsequent chapters. The history of origin, migration, the various social institutions and customary norms governing social relationships in the society are illustrated. In order to understand the land question and the concept of land rights in the society, it is crucial that one is acquainted with the organization that governs land relations in both traditional and modern day Thadou-Kuki society. The significance of land in the society is proved by the fact that social hierarchies are directly or indirectly arranged, based on their relation to land.

1. 2 Manipur: Geographical Location and Population Distribution

Manipur lies between the latitudes 23. 47 and 25. 41 and longitudes 93.6 and 94.48 (Dun, 1992, p. 1). The state boundaries are Nagaland by the North, North-Cachar hills and Cachar Districts of Assam by the west, Mizoram by the South and the Kabow valley and the Chin hills of Burma by the East (and Southeast respectively) (Gangte, 1993, p. 28). Manipur has two distinct physiographic divisions of the hills and the plains. It is nine-tenths hills and one-tenth plains (Das, in Sanajaoba (ed.), 1995, p. 48). The hill area covers nine-tenth of the total area of the state, which indicates that the tribal areas are scarcely populated with a density of 44 people per sq. km. The density in the valley is 631 people per sq. km (Kipgen, in singh (ed.), 2009, p. 329). The plain area mainly consists of the valley region right in the heart and centre of the state and this valley is surrounded by the hills where the tribes of the state resided since pre-history (Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 15).1 Dr. Grierson also scientifically established the

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1 Legends and folklore of the tribes as well as Meiteis of the plains trace their common origins to the hill settlements in the mountains, until the three brothers separated and branched out as the Kukis, the Nagas and the plains living Meities.
linguistic affinity between the Meiteis and the hill people. All people of both valley and hill areas are predominantly Mongoloid who speak Tibeto-Burman languages.2

The state of Manipur has a total area of 22,327 sq. km and the valley covers an area of 2238 sq. km. According to the census of 2001, the total population was 2,166,788 (excluding the population of the sub-divisions of Mao-Maram, Paomata and Purul of Senapati district).3 The population of the hill districts is 8,82,130 and the scheduled tribal population is 7,41,142 out of which the ST population of the valley districts was 56,247 and the urban dwellers were 28,058 only (Kamei, in Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 103). Therefore, the ST population in Manipur is predominantly rural with 95.3 per cent rural and 4.7 per cent urban population.4 They constitute 34.2 percent of the total population of Manipur.5 The total number of villages in the state is 2391 according to the census of 2001 out of which 1901 are villages in the hill areas and 490 are villages of the valley. The tribal villages increased from 1402 (1971) to 1547 (1981), 1727 (1991) and 1901 (2001). The 33 Scheduled Tribes mostly inhabit these hill villages (Kamei, in Singh (ed.), 2009, p. 103).

Below is a diagram to show the district wise composition of the Scheduled Tribe population as per the 2001 census.

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5 ibid
### District wise Scheduled Tribes Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. no.</th>
<th>State/ District</th>
<th>Percentage of STs to total Population of the State/District</th>
<th>District wise percentage of total ST population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>MANIPUR*</td>
<td><strong>34.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td><strong>95.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>18.1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td><strong>95.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>14.3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td><strong>93.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>28.7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td><strong>91.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>14.7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Senapati*</td>
<td><strong>78.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>16.6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Imphal East</td>
<td><strong>6.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Imphal West</td>
<td><strong>4.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Bishnupur</td>
<td><strong>2.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Thoubal</td>
<td><strong>1.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Excluding three subdivisions (Paomata, Mao-Maram, & Purul) of Senapati district

The districts of Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Churachandpur, and Chandel are predominantly tribal districts having more than 90 per cent of the district’s population as scheduled tribe. Senapati district, which constituted the field area for my study, has recorded 78.5 per cent of its population as belonging to the scheduled tribe population.

Anthropologically, a tribe is a social group, the members of which live in a common territory, have a common dialect, uniform social organisation and possess cultural homogeneity having a common ancestor, political organisation and religious pattern. Again, the government recognises a number of tribal groups and they are the Scheduled tribes. However, since all the tribal and analogous social formations are not considered as Scheduled tribe, and when

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6 Op cit
tribal population is considered, it always refers to scheduled tribal population recognised by the government, the number of actual tribal population must be more than what is mentioned as Scheduled Tribe population (Chaudhuri (ed.), 1992, p. vii).

Below is given the tribe wise population of Manipur as per the Census of India in 2001.
### Population of major Scheduled Tribes, 2001 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. no.</th>
<th>Name of the Scheduled Tribe</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Proportion to the total ST population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All Scheduled Tribes</td>
<td>741,141</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thadou</td>
<td>182,594</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tangkhul</td>
<td>146,075</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kabui</td>
<td>82,386</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Paite</td>
<td>49,271</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hmar</td>
<td>42,933</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kacha Naga</td>
<td>42,013</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vaiphei</td>
<td>38,267</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Maring</td>
<td>23,238</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Anal</td>
<td>21,242</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Zou</td>
<td>20,567</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Any Mizo (Lushai) tribes</td>
<td>15,164</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Kom</td>
<td>14,602</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Simte</td>
<td>11,065</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R. Brown, the then political officer made the following observation 1873 about the hill-men who inhabit the mountain tract of the country under Manipur rule. They were divided amongst themselves into innumerable clans and sections,

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7 Census of India, 2001, Manipur (Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes), Office of the Registrar General, India, [http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_manipur.pdf](http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_manipur.pdf), (accessed date 12th may, 2011)
each having slight differences in language, customs or modes of dress, and may be considered generally into two great divisions of Nagas and Kukis. Although no abrupt boundary line can be drawn between the tracts of the country occupied by the two races of Nagas and Kukis, it may be taken for granted that a line drawn about a day’s journey south of the Government road or even at the present day less, running east of Kachar (cachar) to the Manipur valley (about 24.74 degree north latitude) would represent the boundary which separates the two races, the Nagas lying to the north of this line, the Kukis to the South (Brown, 1874).

1. 3 The People: Historical Location of the Kukis

After India’s independence and Manipur’s merger with the Indian union in 1972, the hill people in Manipur was officially classified into three groups—Naga, Chin-Kuki and Old-Kuki. The Nagas of Manipur comprises of the tribes like Tangkhul, Kabui (Rongmei and Pumei), Kacha Naga (Liangmei & Zemei collectively known as Zeliangrong), Mao, Maram, Maring, Angami and Sema under the Official Classification of Tribes in Manipur by the Directorate of Tribal Welfare & Backward Classes, 1981. The Kukis of Manipur comprises of the tribes like Gangte, Hmar, Lushai, Paite, Simte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou, Ralte and Moyong under the same Classification, whereas Old Kuki comprises of the tribes like Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, Kom, Anal, Chothe, Lamkang, Koirao/Thangal, Purum and Monsang. In the present day, Manipur’s population is broadly categorised into three major ethnic groups: the Meiteis of the valley, the Nagas and Kukis of the surrounding hills. Thereby, the tribes of Manipur can be roughly placed under two sections—the Kukis and the Nagas.

The word Kuki is a generic term, which includes a number of tribes and clans. ‘Kuki’ refers to an ethnic entity spread out in a contiguous region in Northeast India, Northwest Burma, and the Chittagong Hill tracts in Bangladesh. The

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8 Official Classification of Tribes in Manipur by the Directorate of Tribal Welfare & Backward Classes, 1981
‘dispersal’ of the people by the existing international boundaries is the result of initial British colonialists’ deliberations. The terminology ‘Kuki’ appears to have originated in Sylhet. In erstwhile East Bengal, Elly refers to ‘the tribe called Kuki by the Bengalis.’ An attributed meaning of the term is ‘hill people’ (Haokip, 2002).

The research will focus on the Thadou dialect-speaking group of the Kuki community. The origin of the word ‘Kuki’, is not known but it first appears in Bengal in the writing of Rawlins entitled “Cucis or mountaineers of Tipra” in Asiatic Researches in 1792 (As cited in Shaw, 1929, p. 11). The second record on the Kuki tribes in general appeared in the Asiatic Researches, volume VII, in a paper from the pen of Surgeon McCrea, dated 24th January 1799 (Macrae, 1919). The term Kuki is a canopy term covering large number of tribes and sub tribes other than the Nagas. The Thadous are the most numerous branch of the Kuki group and constituted the second most populated tribe in the state of Manipur. The term Thadou literally means ‘to kill’ (Tha) and ‘to resist’ (dou).

The Thadou and their co-tribe are usually spoken of as new Kukis, owing to the fact that they came from the Lushai hills later than the other hill tribes, the so-called old Kukis. The group belonging to New Kuki especially the Thado (Thadou) group are Northern Chins who were pushed out of the Chin Hills areas into Manipur and into the Hills of Burma and Assam by Lushais in the middle of the nineteenth century (Lehman, 1980, p. 5). In the words of G.A. Grierson:

The Thado (Thadou) tribe formally lived in the Lushai and Chin Hills where they had established themselves after having expelled the Rangkhola9 and Bete tribes. They were afterwards expelled both from the Chin Hills and the Lushai Hills, and are now chiefly settled in Manipur, in the Naga Hills, and in South Cachar (Grierson, 1990, p. 59).

The language used by them belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family (ibid).

9 They have been classed as the old-kuki sub-group by Grierson and are now settled mainly in Hill Tippera and North Cachar
The Thadous' are a nomadic race, and do not occupy their villages for more than two or three years at a time. Their migration was never smooth. It was in most cases either followed or caused by inter-tribal feuds. If the opponents were stronger, and in fact they were so in many cases, the former had to move out of the place and migrate elsewhere. In addition, their practice of shifting cultivation in the hills impelled them to move on from one place to another. Shakespear had noted that the Thadou-Kukis seldom cultivate the same piece of land for more than two years in succession. Therefore, they need much space, and the desire for new land, coupled with the fear of stronger clans, had led the whole race in adopting a more or less vagabond mode of life (as cited in Ray, 1990, p. 20). Besides territorial migration, there was another form of migration, which may be called local migration. Hutton have recorded that the Thado are a scattered tribe inhabiting parts of the North Cachar Hills, the Naga Hills, and the Manipur state and spreading east into Burma in the Chin Hills and Somra Tract (as cited in Shaw, 1929, p. 4).

In the writing of James Johnstone, the Kukis entered the hill tracts of Manipur between the year 1830 and 1940 and caused much anxiety to the older inhabitants (Johnstone, 1987, p. 25). Colonel McCulloch, the British political agent of that time settled the fierce tribes along exposed frontiers to act as buffers against other recalcitrant tribes (ibid, p. 26). Since McCulloch's "buffer policy" planted Kuki settlements at strategic places barriers, the Kukis have been found settled in scattered pattern all over the Manipur hills. Kukis constitute an overwhelming preponderance in Churachandpur district, Sadar Hills subdivision of Senapati district and Chandel district. Otherwise, they are found mingling with Tangkhul (Naga) tribes in Ukhrul district, Mao-Maram-Paomai (Naga) tribes in Senapati district, and Zeliangrong (Naga) tribes in Tamenglong district (Gangte, 2007, p. 95).

The British ethnographers' like Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear divided them into two broad groups—(a) old and (b) new (Shakespear, 1975). The westward and the northern migration of the Kukis from the Chin area was the result of a series of
various tribal movements of migration in which the stronger tribes drove the weaker tribes farther. In the last half of the eighteenth century, the old Kukis first migrated from the Lushai land and settled down in Manipur and Cachar. To them belonged, Paite, Anal, Purum, Chiru, Hmar, and Kom (ibid). Mackenzie (2007, p. 146) records' the old Kookies were reported in 1853 to be in four clans, viz., Khelema, Ranthai, Bete, and Lamkron. According to Shakespear (ibid, p. 146), record of the appearance of the Old Kuki clans of Manipur is found in the Manipur Chronicle as early as the sixteenth century. He state the possible reason for their migration as, "...probably quarrels with their neighbours, coupled with a desire for better land, combined to cause the exodus, and the movement, once started, had to continue till the clans found a haven of rest in Manipur...(ibid, p. 146)."

The section of the Kukis who had been driven by the powerful Lushai clans and migration to Manipur around the middle of the 19th Century were called the new Kukis (Bhadra, 1975, p. 11). For Shakespear, the term New Kukis is synonymous with the Thado (Thadou) clan (Shakespear, 1975, p. 187). Besides the fact that the old Kukis came to the British territory earlier and the new Kukis later, there existed a considerable organisational division between two groups of people (Bhadra, 1975, p. 11). The difference is discussed by Lieut. R. Stewart who wrote:

There is no regular system of government among the old Kookies, and they have no hereditary chiefs, as is the case with the new ones. They appoint a headman called the Ghalim over each village; but he is much more of a priest than a potentate is, and his temporal power is much limited. Internal administration among them always takes a provisional form (Stewart, 1855, p. 620).

Whereas in the case of the New Kukis, they have a more centralised and autocratic nature of leadership. Therefore, they have a great power of combining effectively against a common enemy and they were much feared by other tribes (Palit, 1919, p. 64).
1.3.1 Origin

In the absence of written records, there is a need to depend on mythological and folkloric beliefs in order to get an idea of the origin of the subject of study. Barthes in, "Mythologies" asserts that myth conceals the socio-political construction of phenomena, and their contestability both conceptually and in practice, by implanting additional claims in apparently factual statements. 'Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact' (Barthes, 1957, p. 143). According to popular mythology, the race has emerged from "Khul" – the subterranean of the earth. This theory is parallel for all Chin Kuki-Mizo tribes of Northeast India (Ray, 1990, p. 17) and Myanmar. The story of their origin is that they used to live under the earth, or rather inside it. There is a variation in the theories regarding the probable location of the 'Khul' (Ginzatuang, 1973, p. 5).

McCulloch (1959, p. 55) contended that the Kukis were known as Khongjai also in Manipur, and that they bring their progenitors from the bowels of the earth. They relate the manner of their reaching its surface thus: One day their King's brother was hunting hedgehogs, when his dog in pursuit of one entered a cavern, and he waiting for its return path remained at the mouth. After lapse of sometime, the dog not having returned, the master was determined to go in and see what had become of it. He did not find the dog, but observing its tracks and following them, he found himself suddenly on the surface of the earth. The scene presented to his view both pleased and astonished him. Returning to his brother, he related about his adventure, and counselled him to annex the new country to his territory, which the king did (Gangte, 1993, p. 14).

William Shaw (Shaw, 1929, p. 24) had his own version of the origin of the Kukis, which he recorded from the collected verbal information as follows: The story of their origin is that they used to live under the earth, or rather inside it. Noimangpa was the Chief of this subterranean region. One Chongthu, a relative of
Noimangpa, went hunting porcupines in the jungle with his dog. He discovered a large hole. He perceived through this that the upper crust of the earth was uninhabited and there was a great darkness. This darkness, which lasted for seven days and seven nights, is called "Thimzin" by the Thadous. Chongthu was so happy at the discovery that he gave up his hunt and went back to his house. He conjured up ideas of forming a village of his own on the earth and planned accordingly. Just about then, Noimangpa, the Chief of the underworld was performing the 'Chon' festival in which everyone had to attend, including Chongja, elder brother of Chongthu. Noimangpa's son, Chonkim was also present. During this feast Chongthu started waving his sharp sword so vigorously that he injured some of the folks present, at which all became angered. This action of Chongthu was premeditated as he thought that by doing so he would be turned out from the underworld and thus has an excuse for going out to the upperworld and forming a village of his own. When Noimangpa heard the news of Chongthu's behaviour, he proclaimed that Chongthu had better live in Heaven, meaning thereby he be killed. Chongthu hearing of Noimangpa's wrath at once prepared to migrate out of the hole in the earth which he saw and which is spoken of as 'Khul' by the Thadous (Gangte, 1993, p. 15).

According to Gangte (1993, p. 16), a local historian, in the genealogical tree from Chongthu to Thadou, the persons are mythical and, therefore, when festivities entailing repetition of the genealogical tree of the Thadous became necessary, the Thempu starts from Thadou and not from Chongthu. Further, from Chongthu to Thadou there were no different languages, and animals and spirits, as well as the mythical ancestors lived in peaceful co-existence. The hole in the earth called 'Khul' is said to be at the source of the 'Gun' river, which seems to be identical with the Imphal River in Manipur State. Etymologically, the word 'Gun' in the

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10 Chon festival is the apogee of all rituals and celebrations (Chongloi, 2008, p. 142). Ideally, the ritual requires the sacrifice a pair of all types of domesticated animals like pig, goat, mithun, fowls, dogs, etc. The duration of the ritual is for seven days. Musical instruments, singing and dancing and lavish supply of food and drink to all the villagers in a village is the hallmark of the ritual (Goswami, 1985, p. 225).
Thadou dialect refers to the 'Imphal River'. In all the stories and legends of the Thadous, the river 'Gun' is frequently mentioned and is of great fame (Shaw, 1929: 24-26). Thus, for a society with no written records, myth becomes history to form a probable or acceptable presumption of origin from which they can derive an explanation to their identity. As Vansina (1985) had said, oral traditions are documents of the present but are expressions of the past. Narratives therefore, play an important role in shaping the identity of a person or the community as a whole.

1.3.2 Migratory Routes

Historians and scholars also have their own opinion on migration routes of the group known as Kukis. According to Horatio Bickerstaffe Rowney:

The Kookies (Kukis) are a numerous race whose proper limits have not been defined even to this day. Their original settlements seem to have been in the hill recesses to the south of the Hylakandy valley (district in Cachar), a wild and difficult country of large extent, whence they have branched out northwards into Hill Tipperah (Tripura), and southwards into Chittagong (in Bangladesh) (Rowney, 1990, p. 179).

One theory proposed that the Kukis came out of China during the reign of Chinese Emperor Chinglung or Chie’nlung, around 200 B.C. This theory was supported by Zawla, a Mizo historian who claimed that the Kukis came out of the Great Wall of China in about 225 B.C., during the reign of Shih Hungti whose cruelty was then at its height (as documented in Gangte, 1993, p. 17). Another scholar Enriquez was emphatic in his claim which he based on scientific data that Mongolian races, who now occupy South-East Asia, and the North East India, originated from the Western China lying between the sources of the Yangtze and the Hwang-Ho Rivers, and migrated in three waves as follows (as cited in Gangte, 1993, p. 17):

1. The Mon-Khmer (Talaing, Pa Lung, En Riang, Ma, Pale, Khais and Annimite) which included Khasis
2. The Tibeto-Burman comprising Pyu-Burmese-Kachin, Kuki-Chin and Lolo

3. The Tai-Chinese, which included Shan, Siamese and Karen (ibid, pp. 17-18).”

Hutton in 1929 in one of his monographs described the migratory routes of the Kukis and the scattered settlements of the Kukis:

For a very long time the Kuki-Chin groups of tribes, pressed from behind Kachins moving Southwards from Chins, and been migrating down the course of the Chindwin River, and some turned back perhaps by the Bay of Bengal, had then moved slowly North West and North wards again, driving out or incorporating previous inhabitants of what are now parts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of East Pakistan, the Chin Hills of Burma, the Lushai Hills of Assam, parts of the areas of Manipur State of the North Cachar Hills and the South of the Naga Hills (ibid, p. 18).

Lehman (1963, p. 11) observe history as showing that both hills and plains peoples have moved from ‘the general region of South-West China and South-East Asia over considerable distances for many centuries until the recent past (ibid, p. 19)’. Carey and Tuck wrote:

...the Kukis of Manipur, the Lushais of Bengal and Assam, and the Chins originally lived in what we now know as Thibet (Tibet) and are of the same stock; their form of government, method of cultivation, manners and customs, beliefs and traditions all point to one origin (Carey et al, 1983, p. 2).

1.3.3 Identities: Thadou or Kuki

The term “Thadou-Kuki” is likely to create some confusion because all the Thadous are Kukis but not vice-versa. Kuki is a broad term like Naga. The research will use the compromise term “Thadou-Kuki”. In this regard, it is necessary to point out here the serious problem of identity of the term Kuki and Thadou. In fact, there are two views prevailing in the present scenario of the society. One is the pro-Kuki view and the other is the pro-Thadou view. While the pro-Thadou group went on insisting on the term Kuki as a foreign term and a baseless colonial construct for administrative convenience, the pro-Kuki group
insisted on a pan-tribal stand under the nomenclature Kuki (Ray, 1990, p. 19). The Thadou Versus Kuki controversy continues to be a contentious issue even to this day. The state government in 1987 recognised the Thadou dialect for all purposes including official correspondence. The pro-kuki group who claimed that Thadou was only a sub group or a clan of the Kuki tribe objected the issuance. According to the pro-Thadou group, the term "Kuki" is only a generic expression used by several tribes and that there is no specific tribe called Kuki (Singh, 1994, p. 646).

The scheduled tribe list of Manipur 1950 in fact recognised the term Kuki, but in the modified list of 1956, the term Kuki was omitted and the term Thadou was included. Consequently, the list of tribes in 1961 and 1971 censuses does not include the Kuki as tribe in Manipur. The word Kuki has been deleted from the Manipur list in which clans or sub-tribe like Gangte, Thadou, Vaiphei, etc. were prioritized (Singh, 1994, p. 646). As against this, the pro-Kuki group have time and again registered their voice of protest and even insisted on the revision of the list of scheduled tribes of Manipur and include Kuki in the list (Ray, 1990, p. 19).

The High Court had directed the Government of Manipur to constitute a committee of experts to go into the controversy whether it should be Thadou or Kuki tribe (Singh, 1994, p. 646). Ultimately, in compliance with the Gauhati High Court decision and based on the Expert Committee recommendation dated 03/02/1995, the Government of Manipur, Education Department issued an order No. 17/1/72-SE dated 12/05/1987 wherein it said that thereafter the language shall be recognised as "Thadou Kuki" language in supersession of the earlier two orders of even number dated 22/03/1977 and 03/01/1981 issue in favour of "Thadou language" and "Kuki language" respectively (Gangte, 2007, p. 93). According to the 1991 census\(^\text{11}\), Kuki was listed at par with the other

\(^{11}\) Table showing distribution of population in Manipur by Mother tongue according to 1991 census, Population of Manipur [Social Statistical Indicator] 2008, Directorate of Economics & Statistics, GOM, p. 61
tribes. The crises of identity manifesting fragmented identities of prioritizing clan or sub-tribe could be attributed to the recognition accorded to smaller ethnic groups as separate Scheduled Tribes (Gangte, 2007, p. 98).

In view of the above tension between groups about the nomenclature and identity of the terms, a compromise term “Thadou-Kuki” has been used here in this work. The use of the term “Kuki” in different places will mainly emphasise the “Thadou-Kukis” or the Thadou dialect-speaking group of the Kuki Tribes.

1.4 Social Institutions in the Thadou Kuki Society
1.4.1 Chieftainship Systems

The Chieftainship system is weaved around the concept of privileges and obligations of both the chief towards the subjects and vice versa. The Kuki chiefs have the responsibility for care of public order and representation of the body politic. The obligations of citizenship include obedience to the law of the land and payment of tributes called ‘changseo’ or basketful of paddy to the chief. The rights of citizenship have been held to include care in sickness and old age; assistance in time of famine and disaster; protection by the courts of life, land and property (Firth, 1959, p. 254).

Land ownership is the exclusive right and prerogative of the chief. In other words, land and land title system of the Thadou-Kukis provide an important basis of legitimacy to the authority of the chiefs (Ray, 1990, p. 44). In the past, the people believed that these chiefs originally had connexion with the gods themselves, their persons was therefore, looked upon with the greatest respect and almost superstitious veneration, and their commands were in every case law (Stewart, 1855, p. 625). According to Stewart, “the Rajah (chief) is the sole and supreme authority in the village or villages under him, no one is competent to give orders or inflict punishments except through him” (ibid).

The institution of Thadou-Kuki chieftainship system might have emerged from the context of tribal wars in the past when a single authoritative figure was a necessity. In their grim struggle for existence and constant war with other tribes,
Title: THE CUSTOMARY COURT (THE CHIEF AND HIS MINISTERS)
they needed a strong leader who could maintain the cohesiveness of the society and protect it from external threat. Thus, the evolution of a strong and authoritarian chieftainship of the Thadou-Kukis in particular and the Kukis in general was a historical requirement for survival. This land control and the ownership system became the necessary condition for maintaining the community as a homogenous community aimed at providing a militant bulwark against the enemy tribe (ibid).

Traditionally, there were two kinds of chiefs among the Thadou-Kukis. One is the Clan chief or principal chief called “Pipa” who had an influence over a wider network of land. The second is named “Haosha” (Haosa) or territorial chief (Bhadra, 1975, p. 23). A traditional tribal authority has its own legitimacy, which is obtained by either descent or by the sanctity of customary rules. In the Thadou-Kuki society, the privilege of descent and the law of primogeniture are the two traditional factors determining the title of chieftainship (Ray, 1990, p. 7). Except for minor local variations, the Kuki polity is ordered into seven-tiered structure, with the chief or Hausapu as the head. According to Asok Kumar Ray (1951, p. 38) the Thadou-Kuki polity is ordered into seven-tiered structure, with the chief or hausapu as the head. He is assisted by the following offices:

1. *Semangpa* (prime-minister)
2. *Pachong* (secretary)
3. *Thiempu* (physician cum priest)
4. *Thihiu* (village blacksmith)
5. *Chonloi* (treasurer)
6. *Lom-upa* (youth director in charge of youth co-operative works)
7. *Kho-sam* (announcer of the decisions of the village council)

T.S. Gangte (1993, Pp. 130-132) has listed the council members into three offices:

1. *Khawsam or Lhangsam Pa*

He is the spokesperson of the council. Literally speaking he is the councillor in charge of information and broadcasting. He convenes meeting of the council,
conveys decisions of the Council to the public, and enforces or implements the decisions of the council. He may be asked to act in any capacity, such as in any capacity, such as, emissary, negotiator, mediator, depending upon his personal talent (ibid, p. 130).

2. Thiempu or Village Priest

Thiempu is the office of the village priest or medicine man. Literally speaking, he is the councillor-in-charge of public health in the truest sense of the term. Persons for this office are chosen from among those who knew the 'thiem-thu' (the secret words of medicine). This office is very often regarded as hereditary, because the secrets of the medicines are not revealed to each and every person (ibid). He also performs incantation or presides over rituals in the process of settling disputes.

3. Thih-kheng Pa or Black-Smith

The blacksmith is attributed an important status in the village. This office goes to the person who has the highest dexterity in black-smithy (ibid).

Dr. Satkhokai Chongloi (2009) describes how the Khosung Inpi (village government) elects prominent person for three main offices: The Khosung Semang (Village administrator), the Khosung Pachong (Village Defence Minister) and Khosung Lhangsam (Village Public Relation Minister or Foreign Minister). Besides these three, he also cites the existent of two other offices, which indirectly influenced the council through the important role they play in the society. The Khosung Thempu (Village Priest) is the councillor-in-charge of public health. He used his skill in witchcraft in curing the sick and dealing with supernatural elements in the village. The Kho Thih-khengpa (blacksmith) is the authorized blacksmith of the village. In traditional village setting, he makes all agricultural tools, and repairs them free of cost. Like Thempu, he also receives "Khotha", where all villagers gave free labour by working in his agricultural field to show gratitude for his service (Chongloi, 2009).
The composition of the assembly also undergoes changes according to the new requirements of the changing times. This office of the Motbung Village Authority (Haosa) in 2009 comprises of the following portfolios—Chairman, Secretary, Joint Secretary, Accountant, Custom, two forests in charge, Defence, 4 members and Lhangsam or Information Secretary. The term of the Village authority in Tujang Vaichong is for two years each. The members are chosen by the chief and sometimes by the recommendation of the people. The main meeting of the village is not more than twice a year. The other meetings are based on emergencies or according to the requirement of circumstances. The biggest meeting is the ‘kumhun assembly’ where the administration of the village for the year is discussed. Women have never been elected as members in the village authority.

The chief of the village and his council of ministers wields great authority and prerogatives over the villagers within the limit of their territorial jurisdiction. He performs judiciary, executive and legislative functions in consultation with his council of ministers. He is vested with absolute powers. The chiefs had to protect the interest of villagers by providing them security socially, politically and economically. The other important roles of the chiefs were to settle disputes, provide care and protection to his villagers. Chieftainship as an institution is the perennial source of customary laws and the retainer of tradition. It is a mechanism by which customary laws are interpreted in the social system.

From the earliest times, the hill tribes practised different land use system in their domain. Though the entire land of the village theoretically belongs to the chief in the case of Thadou-Kukis, the village community who shared the land among

12 Lhouvum, Vumkhopao, Joint Secretary Motbung Semang Pachong, Interviewed on 14th Oct, 2008

13 Assembly meeting at the end of the year

14 Kipgen, Lalboi, Secretary of Tujang Vaichong Village Authority, interviewed on 20th November, 2008

15 Kipgen, as presented in National Seminar on Land, Identity and Development: Manipur Experience (16th and 17th Nov, 2007), organized by ICSSR, NERC
themselves did the actual cultivation. The general condition that prevailed among the Kukis from the earliest times is that the land within the chiefdom is distributed to the villager for cultivation and homestead. The land allotted to the villagers cannot be sold. If a family in the village wishes to migrate to another village, the land will automatically return to the chief. The member of the chiefs council with the approval of the chief superintend and transact all business matters in connection with the land—cultivation, measurement, collection of tax, etc. when a particular land is to be cultivated for Jhumming purposes by a villager it has to be brought into the knowledge of the chiefs for approval. This shifting cultivation is necessitated by the absence of permanent allotment to the villagers.

By virtue of his status as a chief, the chief enjoyed certain privileges. The revenue exacted by these chieftains is paid in kind and labour. They are—

1. 'Changseo' is one basketful of paddy paid to the chief annually by each household for the right of cultivation,

2. 'Samal' is the right hind leg of all hunted animals,

3. "Lamkai" is the one rupee paid to the chief by a purchaser for every head of mithun or buffalo or cattle,

4. "Khotha" is a oneday in a year free labour to the chief by one person from each household,

5. "ThilKotkai" is an export fee paid to the chief and

6. "Sukai" is the four rupees paid to the chief by the bridegroom when he takes a girl for his wife.

One of the chief characteristics of the Thadou-Kukis was the essential habit of migration due to their mode of cultivation and due to the organisation of

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16 Lieut. R. Stewart, 1855, "Notes on The Northern Cachar," however records that the villagers were obliged to work in the chief field for four days in a year
Chieftainship (Bhadra, 1975, p. 25). Their migration was never smooth. It was in most cases either followed or caused by inter-tribal feuds. If the opponents were stronger, and in fact they were so in many cases, the former had to move out of the place and migrate elsewhere. Stewart, a colonial administrator wrote in 1855, "...Kookie (Kuki) is also a migratory animal, and never remains more than three or four years at the same place (Stewart, 1855, p. 7)." Shaw also wrote, "The Thadou is a migratory and moves from village to village on the slightest pretext (Shaw, 1929, p. 16)." The practice of Jhum cultivation necessitates the process of migration as a means to search for virgin soils to increase the superior quality of produce (Bhadra, 1975, p. 26). Another interesting issue in the Thadou society is the obsession for the formation of new villages in order to form new leadership. The younger son of the chief or an influential adversary of the chief can form a new village.\(^{17}\)

1.4.2 Customary Court

By Customary Court, the paper meant the traditional law enforcing body comprising of the chief and his *Semang Pachong* (council of ministers). The Customary Court is the highest body of law in any villages dominated by the Thadou speaking group of the Kuki Tribe. It has as its constitution the traditional customary laws that are unwritten and retained orally. Colonial administrator like Lieut. R. Stewart (1855, p. 627) referring to the North Cachar wrote as early as 1855 the appointment of 'muntries' by the Rajah (Chief) to assist

\(^{17}\) Permission from the chief of the village is necessary for one intending to establish a new village. Accordingly, the intending person first approaches the village chief for his approval. Once the approval is obtained, the intending person has to perform certain social and ritual functions. Along with some village elders, the person has to bring a jar of wine and a pig as offering to the chief of his native village. A feast arranged in the house of the village chief follows this. Counsellors of the village chief and other important elders are invited to the feast. On this occasion, the village chief holds discussion with his counsellors about the request for permission to build a new village. Only after such a discussion, the village chief expresses his approval or disapproval to such a proposal. If the village chief agrees to the proposal, the intending person is free to go ahead with building a new village. The pioneer automatically becomes the chief of the new village and every new inhabitant of the village is required to contribute a basketful of paddy to the village chief every year. This system of contribution of a measured quantity of paddy to the village chief every year is known as *Changseo*. 

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him in carrying on the affairs of the government. They are exempt from free labour and taxation that is due to the Raja from all villagers. The office is not, strictly speaking, hereditary, although in most cases, except when thoroughly incompetent, the son succeeds the father, but is given to those qualified for it, as being men of property and influence as well as of ability and good spokespersons (Stewart, 1855, p. 627).

Dr. Satkhokai Chongloi uses the phrase “Khosung Inpi Thutanna” or village court to describe it (Chongloi, 2009). The Chief’s house or a separate one in the compound of the chief is used as the court. This Customary Court also exists in areas that are not under chieftainship system like Kangpokpi Urban Town. The term of the village authority is for two years in Tujang Vaichong, three years in Motbung and three years in Kangpokpi.

In settling disputes, the customary laws are respected and have an overall authority. Howard S. Becker (Becker, 1963) one of the early exponents of the interactionist approach argues that deviance is not a quality that lies in behaviour itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those who responded to it. From this point of view, deviance is produced by a process of interaction between the potential deviant and the agents of social control. Deviant behaviour or social deviance generally threatens social stability. A culture or society can function efficiently only if there is order and predictability in social life. Non-compliance to the norms threatens this order and predictability. The Customary Court ever since its inception has laid down rigid norms that have to be followed by every member in their jurisdiction. These laws are incongruence with the customary laws of the Kuki society. There are of course certain instances in which the laws are modified according to the context or the gravity of the situation. Besides mapping out the rules and regulation, they have also stipulated the mode of punishment for non-compliance of such laws.

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18 Kangpokpi is not under chieftainship system but under the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee. It is under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration.
C.A. Soppitt (1893, p. 21) recorded the case of the Kukis in North Cachar Hills. All crimes, even the most serious, appear to have been punished by a fine only. On any oath being taken, either on the restoration of peace between villages or between private individuals, the following is the procedure: A bear’s or tiger’s skull is placed upon the ground, a nettle-leaf, husk (paddy), and a sword blade. The persons (or person) to be sworn then step forward, and repeat the terms of the treaty or agreement, and, pointing to the skull, say – "If I break faith, may a bear or tiger, similar to the one this skull belonged to, devour me; may I be stung by the nettle now before me; may the seed I sow be as fruitless as this husk; and may I struck by a sword. Heaven and earth now witness this oath (Soppitt, 1976, p. 21).” He also records another practice, which he considers a very strange custom that was in force among all the Kukis as a method for testing the truth of a man’s words. He wrote:

It being impossible to ascertain the respective veracity of two statements, the party interested agrees to appeal to the water-test. All the villagers are assembled, and proceed to some spot on a river where the water is deep. Here two bamboos are fixed firmly in the mud or gravel at the bottom. The priest of the village then cuts the throat of a white fowl on the brow of each disputant, allowing the blood to run down the face. Should the blood flow red in one case and blackish in the other, the matter is considered half proved, the red showing the man whose statement was true. To make matters certain the test has to be completed. At a given signal, both men plunge into the river, and by the aid of the bamboos, attempt to get to the bottom, and bring up some mud or a stone. The one who fails is the guilty party (Soppitt, 1976, p. 22).

William Shaw records the method of trial by chiefs. Both the parties bring a jar of *ju* (wine) each to the chief’s house where the matter in dispute is tried. The old men19 of the village are usually present also and generally the influence of the *ju* make a compromise by the chief easy as most are well under the influence of it

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19 By old men, Shaw must have meant the village elderly. The Kuki society being a highly gerontocratic society in the past had high regards for the wisdom of the aged population. Their grey hair commands respect from the rest of the population and they constitute an important vote banks in the village administration and legal proceedings.
before leaving and are so genially inclined that they will agree to a great deal (Shaw, 1929, p. 66).

Bloodshed is classified into two types--- (1) Bil Tan Deh Keh (injury in the ear and the forehead) and (2) Thi-kiso (murder). According Letpao Lhouvum20 in the proceeding over the killing of a person, the redressal mechanism is slightly more elaborate as the act of terminating human life is considered the gravest of all crimes. There are fines stipulated to represent certain parts of the body.

- **Dahpi (gong)** — Represents the head of the victim
- **Khichang/ Khichoung** (beads or chain of beads made of cornelian stone)— represents the eyes
- **Khivui (garland)** — representing the umbilical chord

Moreover, the murderer and his family have to pay for certain materials that are necessary as per the customs for the decent burial of a death body.

- **Puondum** (Among the Thadou speaking clans, the prescriptive colour of the cloth should be black with two lines of white colour on the border, length-wise. This is no longer a compulsion today.)—for covering the dead body
- **Kosa** — After the dead body is taken out of the house, it is customary for the family of the deceased to feed the guest who had come to condole or to participate in the funeral.21 This is called ‘Kosa’. It is also meant for purification of the house and to pray for blessing for the bereaved family so that no similar calamity would befall in the house after that.
- **Luongman**22 — price of the dead body

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20 Lhouvum, Letpao, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, Interviewed on the 13th Oct, 2008

21 Thuchih Gil Thulom, 2000 Mimkut Committee, Molvom, Nagaland, p. 3

22 I have not included the cultural meaning of ‘luongman’ for this paper. *Loungman* in this paper would only apply to the price that the murderer has to pay to the victim’s family as penalty for committing the crime.
As a redressive mechanism, Sa-lam-sat is a fine imposed on a guilty person paid in terms of mithun. Another official term is Hem Kham, which literally means stopping the sharp edge of a knife is another important mechanism for maintaining peace and tranquillity. It means that the village chief has already avenged the death of the persons and no further action is required to avenge the death. Tol-theh in its literal term means 'ground cleaning.' The guilty person has to bring a pig and a jar of wine due to the chief from the person who sheds any human blood in a village affray (Shaw, 1929, p. 66). In cases of theft, it is customary for the thief to return the articles stolen and to pay one mithun as compensation (ibid). Mithun as a penalty was the most common form of fine imposed in the past. This either has assumed the form of monetary transaction or been largely replaced by the pig. The penalty of a mithun is, of course, theoretical, and would not be exacted in serious cases or where the thief proved indecently contentious (Shaw, 1929, p. 66).

Victor Turner’s (1957) book on ‘Schism and Continuity in an African Society’ helps us to understand the institution of the Customary Court in the Kuki society. The kind of redressive mechanism deployed to handle conflict and the sources of initiative to end crises, which are all clearly manifest in any social setting, provide valuable clues to the character of the social system. It is interesting at the way in which the punishment always entails distancing them from the things that matters most or actions that have direct consequences on their livelihood or status in the society.

Though all Customary Court in any Thadou speaking group of the Kukis will have similar customary laws that govern it, there is sure to be difference from region to region even as the structure remains the same. The difference could be due to modifications to suit the context or changing times or the manner in which it have been passed down orally from generation to generation. The main

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23 Lhouvum, Kailal, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, Interviewed on 12th Oct, 2008
aim is to maintain tranquillity and normalcy in the social structure. The legitimisation mode of colonial authority and the independent set-up of the Indian state eroded the traditional tribal structure in many aspects. However, the customary court has survived the onslaught of various forces and agencies of time.

1.4.3 Customary Land Laws

1.4.3.1 The British Legacy

In general, before the advent of British rule in India, the regulation of people's use of forest was mainly done through the local customs (Kulkarni, 1987, p. 2143). The beginning of a systematic forest policy begun in 1855 when the then Governor General Dalhousie issued a memorandum on forest conservation (ibid). Under the Forest Act of 1878, forests were divided into (1) reserved forests, (2) protected forests, and (3) village forests (ibid). These regulations were formally initiated in 1894 (Anderson, et al., 1988, p. 36). Robert S. Anderson and Walter Huber explanation of the implication of the forests divisions is relevant to our field. They wrote, "Reserved forests were exclusively for the use of the Forest Department except for certain minor concessions, such as gathering of the fruit of the trees and cutting of the grass, on payment of small dues. In the reserved forests, the surrounding villagers had no rights other than the ones explicitly permitted by the state. The protected forests were also managed by the Forest Department, but the people of the surrounding villages had certain rights in them, such as gathering fruits and other produce of the trees, and cutting timber and wood specifically for the use of the villagers (but not for sale). They also had freedom to graze their livestock and hunt wild game for domestic purposes. Over the protected forests, the villagers had all rights not specifically taken away by the state. The village forests were the communal property of the villagers" (Anderson, et. al., 1988, p. 37). The forest laws in the post independence period like the National Forest Policy of 1952, National
Commission on Agriculture, 1976 and Indian Forest Bill 1980 are considered to be a continuation of the colonial forest policies.

1.4.3.2 The Patta System

The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960, do not govern the land systems in the hill areas, which is the general land law of Manipur. Section 1(2) of the said Act provides that “it extends to the whole of the state except the Hill area thereof.” The State Government may, however extend the whole or any part of the Act to any of the hill areas, except 105 villages in the plain and sub-montane zones inhabited by hill tribes. Therefore, customary laws govern all matters relating to lands in the hill areas (Das, 1995, p. 49). As regard the patta system, there is a difference between the patta in valley and those in the hill areas of Manipur. Patta in respect of lands are known to be in existence as early as 1892. However, patta system as envisaged in Assam land and Revenue Regulation 1896 was introduces when the said Regulation was extended to Manipur Valley. Owners of lands who are liable to pay revenue were given a Patta signed by the Deputy Commissioner, which recognised the rights of the owner in the lands covered by the patta. These rights were heritable and transferable (Das, 1989, p. 21).

During the British period, the tribal chiefs in the hills of Manipur were given individual rights of ownership with a provision for the rights to remain in their ancestry. The government formally recognized the Chief’s right to his land. In this case, the document issued by the Sub-division officers or District Magistrates were treated as equivalent to the patta in the valley and in certain hill areas where MLR & LR was enforced in the post independent era (Gangte, 2010, p. 132-133).

1.4.3.3 Case Studies

Each village has specific land laws laid down as per the customary laws of the society. Let us take the case of the three areas—Tujang Vaichong, Motbung and
Kangpokpi to understand the land laws. The land laws under chieftainship system vary slightly from village to village. The recorded land laws represent the general social regularities beneath which may be hidden contradictions and eruptions in the social structure. Tujang Vaichong under Imphal-Tamenglong Road is under Kangpokpi Police Station. Tujang Vaichong is around 40 kms away from Kangpokpi, and Kangpokpi is around 50 km north of Imphal. It is in the borderline between Senapati and Tamenglong district. There are many villages between Kangpokpi and Tujang Vaichong. Mrs. Konkhochong Kipgen, acting chief of the village opined that the chieftainship system acts as a cultural retainer and preserver and a reservoir for various cultural practices and customs. There is a difference between those who are temporarily elected like the village authority and the permanent chief in terms of the sense of responsibility attached to it. Moreover, commercialisation in terms of forest produce cannot really seep in the jurisdiction of the chieftainship system. Regarding the land laws, the following points have been recorded:

1. The villagers cannot sell the land allotted to them as gift-deeds by the chief to an outsider who has no plans to permanently settle in the village. The lands allotted are therefore not transferable, but is attributable to the same ancestry. The villagers are in possession of it as long as they are in the village and directly go back to the chief in case he wants to migrate to another village. Therefore, it is equivalent to temporary ownership and they cannot use it as collateral.

2. There are also some restrictions regarding forest laws. The chief opened some areas every year to the villagers for jhumming or thing/thinglhang lei and for cutting woods in the mountains. The villagers have to seek the chief’s permission to lease out the land to them. They have to bring with them a rooster as a token or

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25 Imphal-Tamenglong Road is popularly known as 'IT road' by the local inhabitants of Kangpokpi and Tujang Vaichong village. IT road is a road in Kangpokpi town in Senapati district that leads to Tamenglong district. Tujang Vaichong is a village in the border of the two districts.

26 Based on the interview of the acting chief (Mrs. Konkhochong Kipgen on 9th Nov, 2008) and Secretary of Village Authority member (Mr. Lalboi Kipgen on 20th Nov, 2008)
this is also done through the traditional ‘cha-omna’ (where tea is served to the chief before a request is put forward). The permission granted is valid for a year and have to be renewed every year. For cutting of woods, the chief opened the forest for the public for about two-three months (mainly in the month of December, January and February). During that period, the villagers have to collect enough woods to last for their consumption throughout the year. In exceptional cases, a new settler can get access to the woods to build their house. However, the restriction is against using these woods for commercial purposes.

3. There are three types of forest area—
   i) Open reserved area
   ii) Protected area
   iii) Village area

4. The village homestead—
   i) There are no individual lands with proper patta system but there are paper deeds
   ii) The individual land are mostly allotted by the chief without patta system
   iii) The settlement laws regarding those who are residing in the homestead area are—
       a) to dutifully pay the ‘changseo’ or village fund traditionally in the form of a basket of paddy.
       b) to abide by laws laid down in the villages meant for citizens
       c) not to steal or cause problems or distort law and order

New settlers who had taken membership in the village can take enough woods in the village enough to build their house. They have to seek the permission of the chief. They have to take membership in the local church. Regarding religious worship, no other church besides the Kuki Baptist convention is allowed in the
village. The church has a history of being the first Kuki Church in Manipur and established way back in 1916. Natives cannot sell the homestead land or field, lease or put as collateral the land allotted by the chief. New settlers are also made to take an oath not to get involved in unlawful activities like thieving, killing, to abide by the rules and regulations in the village etc. and they are told the consequences or punishment for non-conformity to the laws in the village. They are made to vow to be a good citizen. Leasing or selling out of land to non-tribal or neighbouring villagers is strictly prohibited as per the local law. There are however, some Nepalis (originally migrants from Nepal) settling there who play an important role in the economy of the village. Most houses leased out their wet land cultivation to the Nepalis and they share the harvest in halves by a system known as “tangkhai-chabi.” Still, others rent cows and oxens from them for tilling the field. The house tax for each house paid annually is Rupees 15, which is collected by the chief and submitted it in bulk to the government through the SDO in charge (ibid).

Motbung village is located on the National Highway 39 in Manipur, which is about 26 kms from Imphal, the capital. The name Motbung is derived from the abbreviation, “Mol ong tuo bu um na gam” which means a land that lies between two hills and is well off in food grains. Motbung is the result of the union of many small villages who had come together at the initiation of the first chief Pu Lunneh in the 1930’s. Chieftainship system is still functional to this day. The elected village authority members consisting of 13 members assist the Chief. The office is known by the name “Motbung Semang Pachong” or “Motbung Village Authority (Haosa).” Women have never been represented in the council. As per the chief census of 2008, the household population in the village was 609. The village is divided into ten small neighbourhoods.

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27 Based on the interview of the acting chief (Mrs. Konkhochong Kipgen on 9th Nov, 2008) and Secretary of Village Authority member( Mr. Lalboi Kipgen on 20th Nov, 2008)

28 Kaikhosei, S.L., Chief of Motbung Village, Interviewed on 13th October 2008

29 Motbung Village Authority (Haosa) Record Book, 2008
The main land laws\textsuperscript{30} in the village were:--

1. Annual tax of rupees 50 per house or 1 basket of paddy (\textit{changseu})

2. The forest is divided into two areas—
   
   i. There is the Protected Forest Area, where no woods are allowed to be cut. For violating the laws in the protected area, there was an instance where a villager was fined 'voh-cha'\textsuperscript{31} or 'pig' for encroaching and violating the rules of the protected area. He had cut down some trees for his personal purpose.

   ii. The second type is the Open Reserve Area, where activities like jhumming, grazing and firewood collecting were allowed to be done. Villagers are allowed access to firewood, grazing, woods for new village settlers and jhuming (under the direction of the chief who specifies the site for the year cultivation). The non-tribals (mostly Nepali migrants) pay grazing tax whereas for other villagers, everything is covered under the annual tax or '\textit{changseu}'.

3. In the village cemetery, only those who have membership in the village have the right to bury their dead, done through the Church. Only people who have membership in the village can have membership in the church. There is a special consideration for outsiders or visitors in case of emergencies. They have to plead with the chief through the traditional '\textit{cha om}'\textsuperscript{32} or serving a kettle of tea to the village chief.

\textsuperscript{30} Kaikhosei, S.L., Chief of Motbung, Interviewed on 13\textsuperscript{th} October, 2008 and S.L. Vumkhopao Lhouvum, Joint Secretary of Members of Village Authority

\textsuperscript{31} It is the custom of the Thadou-Kukis in particular and the Kukis in general to be penalized for a wrong act in terms of pigs.

\textsuperscript{32} Discussion and negotiations of any forms whether dispute or alliance is made over tea, which is the modern version of the traditional practice of serving rice beer. The initiating party has to make the tea and the tea is dranked by both the parties to mark an agreement.
4. New settlers will have to get the permission of the chief. No villagers can buy or sell land to an outsider without the chief's permission. Settlers (in rent, esp. Nepalis) will have to take registration after which they can access some of the rights due to a villager.

5. The leasing or selling out of land to non-tribal is by actual norm of customary laws not allowed but there are exceptional cases of intermarriage between the tribal and non-tribal where consideration has to be made especially when the tribal spouse is an influential one. Nevertheless, they cannot enjoy real membership in the village.

6. There can be no commercial transaction of land to people of other villages without the chief's permission but this is not necessary in the case of land transaction between two members of the village. Punishment for offence ranges from banishment from the village or an order to the seller to buy it back from his client.

7. The village homestead comprises of two types of land—

1. There are individual lands with proper patta system. They also call it 'dag-chitha' or paper deeds. Patta is actually not legal as the whole land is in the name of the chief. Temporarily patta or patta for namesake is taken for security sake to avert land conflict. The term 'gift-deed' by the chief is applicable.

2. Individual land allotted by the chief without patta system

In the case of disputes over boundary lines or landmarks, "Khaokikai" is done in which a rope is placed in the location where the Chief deliberates is the line of demarcation between the conflicting parties. The disputing parties have to forward a petition to the chief. The chief will summon the village authority who

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This pattas are actually paper deeds and differ with the pattas of the GOI. As for Kangpokpi, which is not under chieftainship system, the Sub-Division Officers or District Magistrates, under whose jurisdiction the village landfall issues documents, which is considered to be equivalent to Patta in the valley (Gangte, 2010, p. 132).
will together set a date—both the parties are summoned to the court, which is in the courtyard of the chief.

Motbung is a village that is blessed with rocks of big size and good quality. This is evident from the fact that many fencings are made entirely of rocks. This forms an important component in the house building material of the people in Manipur. Therefore, it forms an important raw material for business enterprises. All the rocks in the riverbed of the Imphal River, which flows through Motbung are considered to be the property of the chief. The villagers take out these stones with the permission of the chief. The Hausa (Chief) will distribute the land area or draw a boundary line or put landmarks for each person to avoid conflict. They have to pay a certain amount to the chief. It is difficult to actually state that the following laws apply in the land because new laws will be formulated according to new cases. There is a different way of dealing with non-tribals and tribals on the issue of membership.34

Kangpokpi represents altogether a different entity. It is not under chieftainship system but under the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee.35 It is under Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council Administration. The District Council conducted the general election. There are fifteen members in the committee and the term is for three years. The required qualification is that he should be 30-45 years and above and should be a permanent settler for at least 5 years in Kangpokpi town.36 There has never been a woman member in the committee ever since its inception. However, the president and the secretary of the

34 Lhouvum, Vumkhopao, Joint Secretary Motbung Semang Pachong, Interviewed on 14th Oct, 2008

35 The meeting of the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee is done at least once every month. Besides the compulsory meeting, there is the emergency meeting that is conducted according to the requirement of the circumstances. The biggest assembly is held at the end of the year. The members do not have a salary. However, an honorary pay of rupees 1000 is paid to the Chairperson, Vice chairperson and Secretary. The others are paid Rs. 500. Moreover, a sitting allowance of Rs. 100 is paid to all authority members on every meeting.

36 Guite, Haokholien, Chairman of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee Interviewed on 26th November, 2008
Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation (the prominent and only women organisation in Kangpokpi in the secular sphere) are invited to attend the meetings of the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee over community issues.\textsuperscript{37} Chieftainship system has never existed in any form in Kangpokpi. The number of house as per the 2008 census is 1662. The town is divided into fifteen wards. The appropriate term is hill-urban, which is purely under district council. The apex governing body is the district council. In administration matters, the local customary laws are applied side by side with general administration system of the Indian government.\textsuperscript{38}

Land laws are still based on the customary laws. Jhumming is mostly done on \textit{T. Khullien Mou}, a mountain owned by the neighbouring Naga village. They leased out the land to the people of Kangpokpi who have to pay taxes according to the size of the land allotted to them. The prices ranging from Rupees 200 to above based on the area size of the land. The tax paid is called 'gam-pan' or 'lam-pan.' Wet-Rice cultivation or phailei is very scarce. They are mostly done in the neighbouring villages like Lungpho gam, kaithel manbi or the villages in Imphal-Tamenglong Road like Tujang Vaichong, Gelnel, Bungmoul etc. There is restriction against taking sand from the riverbeds as this might cause landslides. If there is a vacant plot, then an interested contender can approach the authority and register for membership. He still has to register if he wants to buy a plot of land that belongs to another. If a villager wants to sell his land to a person of another village, he has to inform the KUTC. A different form of patta land has entered into Kangpokpi and it is called \textit{jamma bandi} or \textit{Dag Chitha}. Hill house tax paid annually is rupees 15. The KUTC collects them and pays them over to the ADC office.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{37} Haokip, Mrs.Hechin, President of the Kangpokpi Women Welfare Organisation, Interviewed on 27\textsuperscript{th} Dec, 2009

\textsuperscript{38} Guite, Haokholien, Chairman of Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, Interviewed on 26\textsuperscript{th} November, 2008

\textsuperscript{39} ibid
1. 5 Principles Governing the Social Structure

1. 5. 1 The Tucha-Songgao Relationship

Robin Fox has rightly said, “The study of kinship is the study of what man does with these basic facts of life—mating, gestation, parenthood, socialization, sibling ship etc. Part of his enormous success in the evolutionary struggle lies in his ability to manipulate these relationships to advantage (Fox, 1967, p. 30).” The first step for a new household (the younger married sons) is to establish its family Tucha and becha through the initiative of the eldest brother (the father may be alive and be the initiator but the deed is credited to the eldest brother) (Chongloi, 2008, p. 131). In the Thadou society, there are three sets of relatives- the tucha, the becha and the songgao\(^{40}\) who play an important role and constitutes the strongest strand in the fabric of the constitution of the

\(^{40}\) Specific duties and obligation assigned to the ‘Tucha’ and ‘Sanggao’ relatives in relation to the ego-

1) If a ego kills an animal in compliance with his social obligation for throwing a feast, his ‘Tucha’ relative has to dress the meat.

2) The ‘Sanggao’ relative of a ego can claim the corpse of the latter is mother or wife. The ‘Tucha’ Relative is bound to give the former one ‘mithun’ to the latter as the price of the corpse. This is due to the practice of the bride price system, where the ego’s mother or wife relative (Sanggao) can claim the remaining balances of the stipulated bride price after their death.

3) At the time of death in the family of an ego, the ‘Tuchas’ acts as the messengers to inform the close relatives of the sad news. The ‘Becha’ may be termed as representative in nature or spokesman who have been vested with the full power and authority of an ego. The ‘becha’ relatives, therefore, include the following categories of persons:-

1) Male members of exogamous relatives;

2) Male members of the same clan of the ego, except those of ‘tuchas’ and ‘bechas’;

3) Close, reliable and bosom friends of a ego;

4) Persons of ability who can efficiently shoulder the responsibilities associated with the ‘becha’ relatives to act on behalf of ego.

The duties and obligations of the Bechas include--

1. He is the de-jure performer of the social obligations.

2. Dress the meat of any animal killed by ego (Gangte, 1993).
society. These relatives are possible mainly because of the practice of marriage of mother's brother daughter or 'neinu' by way of preference (Gangte, 1993, p. 46). These institutions could also have been set up because of the institution of hunting among the Thadou-Kukis. The Kuki life is arranged on a pattern of community living, where almost everything essential pertaining to economic, social, political and the religious life is shared among its members (ibid). In case a man organised a social occasion in which he kill an animal for feast, or even when he kills wild game during a hunting expedition, there are certain mode of distribution of its flesh by which the different parts of the kill are set apart for certain categories of relatives of the performer (ibid, p. 51).

'Tuchas' offers assistance to the ego on any social related functions and in many occasions represents the ego. A Tucha is selected amongst the father's sister’s family, sister’s family or daughter’s family known in the local terminology as 'pu-te' family (ibid, p. 52). Thus, recruitment is done based on the relation that is form via the females in the family. This is surprising as the society is patrilineal and agnatic (related on the father’s side). Social groups are recruited on the bases of blood ties or affinal ties (Fox, 1967, p. 36). The 'Becha' is termed as a representative or spokesperson who has been vested with the full power and authority of an ego (ibid, p. 52). It is not mandatory for a 'becha' to be chosen from amongst one relative or be a product of marriage alliance. They can be also be selected from one-clan members, a close friend or any person with the ability to shoulder the responsibilities required of the title (ibid). The two sets of people - the 'Tucha' and the 'Songgao' relatives to an ego-are given in the chart (Gangte, 1993, p. 47).
'Tuchas' have a complete circle of social obligations by performing his role of 'Tucha' in relation to his 'songgao' relatives. The 'Tucha-Songgao' relationship resembles the 'Patron-Client' relationship, though the principles of the two relationships are different. While 'Tucha-Songgao' relationship is purely based on blood connections, which expresses loyalty and solidarity of the blood relationship and mutual voluntary obligation, 'Patron-Client' relationship, is based on economic consideration. The former is without profit motive, as against the motive of individual consideration, in the 'Patron-Client' relationship. 'Tucha-Songgao' relationship, is, in fact, a by-product of matrimonial alliance and can have no other consideration whatsoever (Gangte, 1993, p. 48). In marriage, the role of the 'Tucha' and 'Becha' is important as they accompany the parents of the boy to seek the hands of the prospective bride. The Bechas of the bride's family
and the bridegroom’s family are given the responsibility of doing the necessary negotiations like fixing the date and deciding the bride price.

The influence of these three institutions is evident in all aspects of the Thadou-Kukis’ social life. Although the missionaries and the British administrators were influential in changing many customary practices, this set of institutions has survived even today. Its importance percolates to all other institutional agencies like marriages, birth and death ceremonies and other family occasions (Das, 1985), p. 52). Therefore, it shows that the society recognised patrilineal and matrilineal descent groups simultaneously (also known as unilineal descent groups) as the basic political units (Fox, 1967, p. 51). “...Individuals recognize their cognates as kin and have obligations to them and expectations of them—in the payment of bride price, for example, or homicide payments (ibid).”

1.5.2 Customary Usages and Practices

The Thadou-Kuki society is ‘patrilineal’ as the rights and duties, including rights of inheritance and succession is passed in the male line.41 The conjugal family, which is, ‘the one formed by the marriage of the two parents’ is the accepted form of family in the society.42 Regarding the mode of addressing an elder, both descriptive and classificatory terminology of Kinship is used.43 A curious feature is the multiple use of the term ‘hepu’ which is used to addressed one’s father’s father, mother’s brother, mother’s brother son, mother’s father, wife’s brother, wife’s father and generally for any aged elderly men or any

41 This based on Robin Fox definition of the term ‘patrilineal’ (Fox, 1967, p. 52).
42 Robin Fox gives the definition of ‘conjugal family’ (Fox, 1967, p. 37).
43 The study of relationship to terminology can be traced to Lewis Morgan who distinguished two types of kinship terminology—classificatory and descriptive terminology. Descriptive terminology is one, which refers to the exact relation of the person towards another whereas classificatory is a more general one, which fails to, distinguished all direct relatives from collateral relatives.

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respectable man in the society. In the Thadou-Kuki society, the elder brother or Upa has the right to enjoy certain privileges over younger brother or naopa (Das, 1985, p. 46). The elder brother and his descendants occupy a higher status than the younger brother and his descendants. The lineal segments of the kinship system also follow the same principle (ibid). The rule of primogeniture governs the system of inheritance among Thadou-Kukis. The eldest son of the family inherits property of the father. Inheritance goes by male line only and no female has any right to claim as heir of a person whether male or female. In the absence of male issue, inheritance will go to the sons of his eldest brother, and if he has no elder brother then to his younger brother, or sons. If he has no brother, the property goes to the nearest male line (Das, 1995, p. 66). In the past, girls were allowed to retain a small portion of any jewellery belonging to their mother (Soppitt, 1976, p. 16). “McCulloch’s observation on the Thadou refers to three important features, namely, their attention to genealogy, the distinctions of clans and the respect paid to seniors (as documented in Das, 1985, p. 46).”

Marrying Mo Br Da (mother’s brother daughter) or Neinu is the most preferred union among the Thadou (Das, 1985, p. 47). One, however, must not marry a girl from his father’s side Fa Si Da or Tunu (ibid). Grierson wrote about the practice of the probationary form of marriage amongst the Thadou-Kukis:

The Thados (Thadous) buy their wives, and the price may be paid in money or through personal bondage for two or three years (Grierson (1990, p. 60).

The wife-receivers have to pay bride price to the wife-givers, which in some cases to be supplemented by physical labour and ceremonial services by the

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44 Hepu is a term of very great respect, and if used outside its genealogical applicability, would only be so used to show particular respect (Bhandari, 1996, p. 420).

45 The practice is also called the probationary form of marriage. The would be groom in order to show his prowess and ability to provide a good life to the would be bride, work for a period of time at girl’s house.
former (Das, 1985, p. 49). This practice is termed under probationary form of marriage in sociology. In local terminology it is known as *kong-lo* which means "waist-earning". It means the prospective groom has to prove his worth and capability of providing for the woman he aspire to marry by working for her family for a period (Gangte, 2008, p. 149). The groom family is not allowed to pay the bride price in the full amount. On her death, the man has to pay the remaining sum called 'loungman' to her nearest male relative.

The Kukis bury their death even before the advent of Christianity (Dalton, 1872, p. 52). Deaths are generally classified into three broad divisions, namely—(1) *Thi-pha* or natural death, (2) *Senhut Thi* or childhood death (up to the age of three) and (3) *Thi-sie* or unnatural death (Gangte, 1993, p. 107). If a man dies without producing a male heir, his case is termed as *chapagap*, which means end of the main line of descent. Another such term is *ingap* meaning total extinction of the line of descent (Das, 1985, p. 48).

In the pre-colonial times, the Thadou-Kukis bury their death. Prior to the burial, the bodies were first allowed to lie in state for several days. Dalton wrote in the year 1872:

> The bodies of great men were placed before slow fires till the flesh is effectually smoke dried, and then laid out dressed and equipped for a month or two, during which time open house is kept amidst great feasting. Eventually the body is buried with food and drink, and with the skulls of the animals slaughtered for the funeral feast a fence is made around the grave. It was one time considered essential that a fresh skull of a human victim killed for the occasion, should adorn the grave of a

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46 This runs parallel to the story in the book of genesis in the Bible in which Jacob served his uncle Laban for 14 years for the hands of Rachel (Genesis, 29-31)

47 Lhouvum, Kailal, Cultural Specialist, Motbung Village, interviewed on 12th October 2008

48 A person who dies by accident like falling off a tree, drowning in water or is killed or murdered or take his own life by committing suicide is called *thi-se* or unnatural death. The dead body of such person is not entitled to get proper funeral rites as he would have received if he met a natural death
raja, but Kukis settled in British territory have found it convenient to abandon this observance (Dalton, 1872, p. 52).

Combs were considered a sacred thing in the customs of the people. It is an ill omen to lose them and a man and his wife may use the same comb. When a man dies, his comb is supposed to be buried with him, and his near relations should by tradition break their combs and must roam with dishevelled hair for a few days before they renew them (ibid). The institution of ‘Sawm’ as the dormitory of the able-bodied young men of the village as the primary means of initiation and education plays a significant role among the Kukis and is a manifestation of the lifestyle they lead (Gangte, 1993, p. 12). The form of agriculture common is Jhumming and rice is the staple food. Hunting was practised by means of traps and snares as also with their matchlock guns, which are also used in warfare (Meerwarth, 1919, p. 31).

Another important feature that characterised the society is the tendency to attribute a gender character or binary aspects to all aspects of the social system. Everything is gendered, not only in human relationships but also in the categories that people use to classify each element of the social systems. This is reflected in the practices that orients the social structure and is manifested in the hierarchies embedded in the society. There is gender-based division of labour. The colonial administrator Lewin wrote about the gender based division of work in the society in the year 1870. Housework is attributed as the work of women, while the men were employed in hunting, in cultivating, and in war (Lewin, 1870, p. 147). At the societal level, there is social arrangement of labour in which each section of the society whether it is the women, the youth, the children, the aged group are grouped based on the commonness of the agricultural related work that concerns them. This is called Lom, which is an organisational set-up for the purpose of agricultural activity (Goswami, 1985, pp. 95-96).
1.6 Beliefs Systems and Modes of Worship

Even before the advent of the missionaries, the worldview of the Thadou-Kukis was a religious one. They attributed the existence of the cosmos to the supernatural. The Thadous' believe that Pathen who rules the universe gives life to everything (Shaw, 1929, p. 71). For them, Indoi usually kept in one corner of the house is the symbolism that affirms the ever presence of Pathen (God) at all times (Chongloi, 2008, p. 5). “A slanted mother pig skull, a piece of a he-goat’s curved horn, bracelet, dao, a jar made from gourd, etc., are the various components that constitute an Indoi (ibid).” This believe in the existence of one Supreme Being as the creator and sustainer of all called, ‘Chung Pathen’ or ‘Holy Father of above’ is the core of the primal religion (ibid, p. 134).

The Thadou-Kukis also performs rituals for appeasing evil spirits of numerous types, not out of reverence for them as is the case of the Pathien, but for fear of the evil they can inflict on them. Some of the common disembodied spirits were:

1. Gamhoise means evil spirit of the jungle and his wife Inmunse means evil spirit of the house (Shakespear, 1975,p. 199). Together it means ‘accursed place’ by a combination of the two words. They are souls of the persons meeting unnatural death or thi-se (Gangte, 2010, p.30). “They are supposed to inhabit the densest forests on the highest mountain tops, and when passing through such their dread names are never mentioned (Shakespear, 1975, p. 199).”

2. Joumi is a spirit, which is said to be as tall as trees. Jou denotes ‘a densely forested region’, and mi means ‘human’ or ‘dweller’ (Chongloi, 2008, p. 139). They are reportedly very fond of chicken and kill them by throttling the neck and sucking its blood. The mere sight of them is enough to make people die out

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49 The Primal religion of the Thadou-Kukis is given in a more elaborate form in the subsequent chapter.
1. A BAMBOO SPIKE—TO CONFER VITALITY AND STRONG GROWTH
2. A GOURD—TO CONFER PROSPERITY AND PERFECTION
3. A GOAT’S HORN—TO CONFER BEAUTY AND VIGOUR
4. PADDY PLANTS—TO CONFER BOUNTIFUL HARVEST
5. A CORD FIBRE MADE OF A PLANT CALLED KHAOPI—THE OWNER OF THE HOUSE AND ALL THAT RESIDES IN IT REMAINS STRONG AGAINST ALL ADVERSITY
6. A SMALL BAMBOO SPEAR-HEAD—TO WARD OFF MISFORTUNE, DISEASE AND GHOSTS
7. A MINIATURE GOURD LADLE—TO CONFER PLENTY IN ALL THAT CAN BE LIFTED IN A LADLE—WATER, WINE (I.E. RICE WINE), GRAINS ETC.
8. A PIG’S SKULL—TO CONFER VIGOUR AND FERTILITY

SOURCE: WILLIAM SHAW’S NOTES ON THE THADOU KUKIS (1929)
of fear (Gangte, 2010, p. 30).50

3. **Kulsamnu** is a female spirit, which attacks on the souls of the death person and tries to possess it. The Thadou-Kukis in the past believe that after death, the spirits of men and women, great and small go to *mi-thi-kho* (the abode of the dead). *Kulsamnu* sits on the roadside and seizes all wandering souls except those who had slain men and beasts or had given feasts in their lifetime (Shakespear, 1975, p. 199).

4. **Chomnu** is another female spirit but it rarely causes any trouble to humankind. It is considered to be a harmless spirit (Singsit, 2010, p. 97).

5. **Gamlahlen** and **Gamkao** are spirits of the jungle which causes serious sickness to person whom they meet (Gangte, 2010, p. 31).

6. **Kaomei** is another spirit, which flies at night like a firefly (Singsit, 2010, p. 97).

7. "**Kaosie** is a greedy spirit. It can enter in a person and convert such person into a different personality, changing the voice, the behaviour and the strength. Such spirit can be released only when it is appeased with what it wants (Gangte, 2010, p. 31)."

8. **Lhangnel** is another dreaded supernatural. Lhangnel is said to be capable of transforming itself to various animals such as big serpent, a small snake, wild coke, elk etc (Chongloi, 2008, p. 139). People prohibit and fear to utter the name near river or lake (ibid).

The Church as an institution has replaced the functions of many traditional institutions in the society. Contrary or parallel to the type of church that the missionaries envisaged, churches usually either challenged existing norms or contextualised itself to adjust to the patterns of the social structure. Though the colonial rulers have left the place for good, the church is an institution that is the remnant of the impact made by them. It has become a strong political force in

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50 For Shakespear, *Zomi or Joumi* is a sight of which is a sure forerunner of some dire misfortune, and this could only be averted by the immediate sacrifice of dog (Shakespear, 1975, p. 199).
the society as religion is not only a part of culture but also has an autonomous power to influence most elements of cultural complex. For example, in of Manipur, the tribals in the hills who profess Christianity have a comparatively different culture and lifestyle in contrast to the Vaishnavite population in the plains (Sitlhou, 2006, p. 16). Religious differences resulted in a sharp contrast in the cultural topography. It removed the traditional institutions like priesthood, the belief systems like 'indoï', primeval religion and plays an important role in village administrations. In the past, the chief would banish any of his villagers at the slightest acts of disobedience. Nowadays, it is 'ex-communication from the Church' that the people feared more than 'banishment from village.'

The first missionizing agencies in the north west of Manipur were the Baptist mission led by William Pettigrew (Zeliang, 2005). So, the church structure of the villages that falls within the north west of Manipur, including the Senapati district in which lies my field area, is highly influenced by the Baptist church model. The organisational structure within an average church comprised of a men's wing, a women's wing, youth wing and the children Sunday school department. Whereas, the men's department have higher authority with regard to the administration of the church as a whole, the women's department is usually supportive branches, which aid the men's wing and involved in the social welfare activities of the church and the society. There is the children department, which teaches children on basics of Christian living based on the stories from the bible. The youth department belongs to the unmarried youths in the church.

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51 Indoi is the symbolism that affirms the ever presence of Pathen (God) at all times. A slanted mother pig skull, a piece of a he-goat’s curved horn, bracelet, dao, a jar made from gourd, etc., are the various components that constitute an Indoi. (Chongloi, 2008, p. 5)

52 Singsit, Douthang, Keithelmanbi Village (Senapati District, Manipur), interviewed on 5th september, 2006 (during my pilot survey)

53 Based on my observation of the churches in Tujang Vaichong (Kuki Baptist Convention), Motbung (Motbung Baptist Church) and Kangpokpi (Kangpokpi Centre Church)
The first Kuki church was built in 1916 in Tujang vaichong village (Lolly, 1985, p. 39). Until date, the Kuki Baptist Convention is the only Church in the village.\textsuperscript{54} Church planting then gradually spread to other Kuki villages in Manipur. The Motbung Baptist Church or the Thadou Baptist Church, the main church in Motbung was established on 1\textsuperscript{st} January 1944. Motbung had only about four different churches, which was quite surprising for a big village. They were Motbung Baptist Church, Biblical Baptist Church, Immanuel Baptist Church, Gospel light Baptist Church, Judaism with MBC having the greater population. Perhaps the fact that it is the oldest church and the chief is a member to it contributed to its growth.\textsuperscript{55} The church plays an important role in the society too\textsuperscript{56}. Kangpokpi has about 17 churches in all.\textsuperscript{57} Kangpokpi Christian Church was taken as a sample to represent all other churches.

\textsuperscript{54} Based on field observation
\textsuperscript{55} All the church other than Judaism follows the Baptist doctrine so it is surprising as to why it is divided.
\textsuperscript{56} The chief had a mastermind plan to bring all the church under one umbrella for further unification of its people. A divided church he thought would affect the unity of the people.
\textsuperscript{57} Record of the Kangpokpi Urban Town Committee, 2008