CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter presents the introduction of the Thadou. It contains the origin of the Thadou, religion, custom and culture, political life, economic life, the social changes that have taken place in the Thadou society and the linguistic classification of Thadou. The coming of Christian missionary in the North-East India no doubt spread the holy gospel to the people and the impacts of the coming of the missionaries are felt in different ways. This chapter discussed the impact of the Christian missionaries in the Thadou society in particular and the changes that are felt and face by the Thadous in different aspects are explained in this chapter. The linguistics classification of Thadou under the Northern kuki-chin language of the Tibeto-Burman language family is shown with the help of a family tree in this chapter. This chapter also contained the linguistics typology of Thadou-morphological classification and the syntactic typology.

1.1. Origin

Manipur which is one among the North Eastern States of India is a land of multi-races, multi-languages, multi-religions and multi-culture. The three major people living in Manipur are the Meiteis, Kukis and the Nagas. Meiteilon or Meitei language is the lingua franca of Manipur. Thadou is one among the 26 Schedule Tribes recognised in Manipur. Thadou stands for both the people and the tribe. The language used by the Thadous is known as Thadou Pao. Thadou is spoken in many North Eastern states of India like Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, etc and in the Chin state of Burma but with the highest number of population of Thadou speakers in Manipur. Within the state of Manipur Thadou is spoken in different districts explicitly in Churrachandpur, Chandel, Ukhrul, Senapati, Imphal-East
and Imphal-West. Out of which Churachandpur and Chandel has the highest concentration of Thadou speakers. According to 2011 census total population of Thadou in Manipur is 1,90,595.

Though different people advocated different theories of the origin of the Thadou or the tribal people of North East India it is still untraceable. According to Gangte (1993) the origin of the Thadou-Kukis is shrouded with myth and mythologies which have been orally handed down through generation to generation. Due to the absence of any written records one has to rely on the oral tradition handed down through generation to generation and whatever recorded has to be taken true or else there will be a never ending debate to draw a conclusion about the origin of the Thadous or any tribal people of the North East India. If the historical accounts are to be taken true accordingly, the Kukis are believed to come out of the bowel of the earth or a cave called ‘Khul’. The location of the khul is debateable. Different people have different view about the location of the khul. Since then, the Kukis lived a nomadic life. There is no permanent settlement at one particular place. They migrated from one place to another. Conferring to Lhungdim (1995) the Kukis would rather choose to build houses in the hilly region in a group of 20 to 30 houses. The Thadous in particular are scattered over occupying vast hilly region with great bulk of population in the hilly region of Manipur. Sitlhou (1995) bring up that according to a legend, there is a good reason why the Thadous occupy mostly the hilly region especially in Manipur. There was once a great flood in Manipur during which the Thadous took refuge at Kholkip Kholjang, located on the right bank of the Imphal River in the north of Manipur. After the flood, they did not re-migrate to the plain with the presumption that the same flood would take place again.
1.2. Social life

As social beings, the Thadous enjoy a peaceful way of living and they are merry making loving people. Haokip (2011) notes that many festivals are connected to agricultural practices such as:

1.2.1. **Mim Kut**: This takes place in August to September during the harvesting of maize crop.

1.2.2. **Chang Kut**: This is a post-harvest festival celebrated during December by the whole community after bountiful rice harvest.

1.2.3. **Lom Sel Neh**: This festival is celebrated by young people of the community after the season’s work is over.

1.2.4. **Chon le Han**: This festival is celebrated for relaxation and enjoyment. Hosting of this occasion involved feasting and holding of sporting events.

1.3. Religion

Prior to the advent of Christianity, the traditional Thadous believed in the Supreme God known as ‘Pathen’. To invoke His blessings, they offered animals sacrifices like Pigs, Hens etc. in times of sickness and celebration which is done by the village priest known as the ‘Thempu’. But after the advent of Christianity there are lots of religious practices which they give up because they are considered to be against their new faith. The impact of Christianity in Thadou society in different aspects is discussed by Sitlhou (1995), Gangte (2003), Haolai (2006), Chongloi (2013).
1.4. Culture

The culture of marriage which the Thadou follows till today is the preferential marriage of Mother’s Brother’s Daughter called ‘Nei’ with the Mother’s own son. Neinu marriage is preferred as a means of cementing bonds between the concerned families. The family bonds are thus strengthened. Parents preferred ‘Nei’ as their daughter-in-law. Nevertheless those who marry his/her Neinu or Neipa are appreciated by the society. But the practice of such marriage has decline because marriage takes place due to the elopement of a boy and a girl against the wishes of the parents. The most important element in the Thadou society is the ‘Upaship’. Upa is the first male born of the family. According to Chongloi (2009), the generation and genealogy of the Thadous is reckoned from the first male born of the family, who represents his father if the latter is deceased or is unable to function. Haolai (2006) claimed that it is the Upa who inherits all the properties of the family. Even though there are no written documents available, the Thadous has been counting generations and genealogy long before from the first male born of the family or who is known as the Upa. Chongloi (2009) cited that when someone died in a village, his/her death is announced by ringing a bell or drum. The body of the dead person is washed and dressed in clean dresses the dead body was buried along with some of his belonging. They also maintain separate burial ground for natural and unnatural death.

1.5. Political life

The political life of the Thadous begins and ends in the village. The chief of the village called ‘Haosa’ is the head of the village. The post of the chieftainship is passed on from father to his eldest son. Gangte (1993) claims that the post of
chief is not elective but hereditary and in order to run the village administration, the chief appoints a group of persons collectively known as Semang Pachong to assist him. The chief with the ministers rule the people with honesty so that they can maintain a peaceful atmosphere in the village. The chief in the presence of his Semang Pachong decides the customary fine and penalty to be imposed on the guilty. According to Sitlhou (1995) the chief are equivalent to the Kings in the past. Political matters, law and order enforced by the chief are almost the same with the kings in the past.

1.6. Economic life

In the economic life, agriculture is the main occupation of the Thadous. Sitlhou (1995) asserts that there are minor occupations like blacksmith, handicraft, carpentry, hunting, trapping and fishing etc. The main type of cultivation practised by Thadou is ‘Shifting cultivation’. In shifting cultivation the site cultivated in the current year is not generally repeated in the next year, on the presumption that the minerals contained in the soil are already consumed. Thadous are also engaged in Jhuming cultivation which is seasonal. In the month of January and February, the forest is cut and allowed to dry and burnt. And in April, the debris are then piled up in different places and then burnt. This is termed ‘Mangse’ in Thadou. After which a strong fence is constructed called ‘Seltho’ to protect the crops from the jungle and domestic animals. In Jhuming cultivation the Thadou used limited number of implements. The main tools used are axe, dao, hoe, sickle, dibble etc. Jhuming cultivation is practised till date in the hill-villages and the mode of cultivation is still the same with that of the past. During off seasons, men are involved in hunting, fishing, trapping and handicraft etc. Women are usually busy in weaving after harvesting. Some valuable clothes

### 1.7. Impact of Christianity

The Thadous are rich in culture and traditional practices. Christianity has a lot of impact in the Thadou society. Like all the societies of the world, the Thadou society has confronted a high rate of social changes. All these changes can be considered as the impact of Christianity. According to Gangte (2003) the western missionaries imposed certain do’s and don’ts. The impact can be felt in different ways.

#### 1.7.1. Cultivation

In the field of cultivation the people of the traditional society which was once engaged in multi-cultivation has narrowed down only to rice. The pattern and technique has changed with time. They started adopting new methods of cultivation. Terrace and irrigated farming are now common among the Thadous which was once unknown to them. Animals like Cows and Buffalos are tamed for agriculture purposes. Secondary crops are grown only in kitchen gardens. People started moving down to the valley. Holding of government jobs, advancement of education and other factors has compelled them to settle down in the valley.

#### 1.7.2. Education

According to Gangte (2003) the Christian missionaries introduced Roman Script to the people and as such the Roman script now forms the basis of the Thadou –
Kuki literature. Though not the official language of Manipur, Thadou/kuki is recognised by the Government of Manipur. The earliest literary work done on Thadou-Kuki was the translation of the New Testament by Ngulhao Thomsong 1942 and in 1971 the complete text of Holy Bible was translated by Rev.T. Lunkim. It has been included as a subject in High school level at the IX and X standard and XI and XII standard in Higher Secondary level. Recently it has been upgraded till Under Graduate Level/Degree Level in Manipur.

1.7.3. Marriage

The traditional Thadou marriage was performed by the thempu (priest) where sacrifices were offered to the spirits to please them. But Gangte (2003) claims that such practices are abolished in the present days and marriages are conducted in the church by the pastor in the presence of ordained ministers, friends and relatives. And at the time of marriage proposal the boy’s family offered ju (wine) to the girl’s family only after which the negotiation begins. But due to the spread of Christianity ju which once play very important role in the Thadou society especially at the time of marriage proposal was replaced by tea and the like. According to Chongloi (2013) it has become a common practice of groom’s parents to purchase bridal gown, a gold ring, and a new suit for best man, presentation to the youth organisation along with bridesmaid and the best man and the relatives of the two families, arrangement of car/buses for fetching the bride, wedding cards, etc. All these activities are the influence of the western culture introduced by the missionaries before which the traditional Thadou society have no such practices and marriages were conducted in its own traditional way without huge expenditure.
1.8. Linguistic typology of Thadou

Thadou is a Northern Kuki-chin language of the Tibeto-Burman family. The genetic classification of Thadou according to Lewis (2009) is shown in the figure 1 below.

![Genealogical Classification of Thadou (Lewis 2009)](image)

Figure 1: Genealogical Classification of Thadou (Lewis 2009)
1.8.1. Syntactic typology

The syntactic characteristics of Thadou are as follows:

1.8.1.1. Basic word order

Thadou is a verb final language and exhibit SOV word order. For example,

1. Kim -in Bu a- ne e
Kim EGR Food 3sg eat DECL
S O V
‘Kim eats food’.

1.8.1.2. Postposition

Thadou is a postpositional language. For example,

2. dɔxaŋ tʃuŋ a?
Table on LOC
‘On the table’.

1.8.1.3. Pro-drop Phenomenon

Pronoun which occurs before the subject can be dropped in Thadou. For instance,

3. kei ka lam e
1sg 1sg dance DECL
‘I am dancing’.

4. ka lam e
1sg dance DECL
‘I am dancing’.

Thus, the subject or the pronoun in (3) can be dropped and the subject agreement particle ka- takes the place of the subject as in (4).

1.8.1.4. Genitive construction

Genitive precedes the governing noun or the possessor precedes the possessed as in:

5. tʰəŋboi in
tʰəŋboi House
‘Thangboi’s house’.

1.8.1.5. Negative construction

In a negative sentence in Thadou, the negative particle follows the verb as in,

6. bu k-a neʔ nəm poi
food 1sg-3sg Eat agree NEG
‘I don’t want to eat food’.

1.8.1.6. Interrogative construction

The question particle occurs at the final position of the sentences as in,

7. na- min ipi həm
2sg name What Q
‘What is your name?’

1.8.1.7. Numeral

In Thadou, numerals follow the head noun.

8. in li
house Four
‘Four houses’.

1.8.2. Morphological Description of Thadou

The morphological descriptions of Thadou are as follows:

1.8.2.1. Agglutinative

Thadou is agglutinative in nature.

1.8.2.2. Word formation process

Since Thadou is agglutinative in nature words are formed through the process of affixation and compounding.

1.8.2.2.1. Affixation

In Thadou affixes are mostly attached to verbs and adjective. Thadou has more suffixes and lesser prefixes. –na is a nominalizing suffix mostly attached to verb and adjective as in
9. lup + na > lupna ‘bed’
   lay (V) SUF

10. hɔi + na > hɔina ‘beauty’
    Beautiful (Adj) SUF

The most widespread prefix in Thadou is ki-. The use of ki- as a prefix is shown in

11. ki + ʧiem > kitʃiem ‘playing’
    PRE play

**1.8.2.2.2. Compounding**

Compounding is an important process in the formation of word in Thadou. Words can be formed by the combination of two roots. It can be the combination of N + N, N + P, N + Adj. Examples are shown below,

12. sa + kʰəu > səkʰəu ‘bag’
   Meat (N)     rope (N)

13. in + ʧuŋ > inʧuŋ ‘roof’
   House (N)    up (P)

14. bɔŋ + nɔu > bɔŋnɔu ‘calf’
   Cow (N)      tender (Adj)