CHAPTER IV

THE PROCESS OF ETHNIC FISSION
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4.1 Historical Account

The history of the relationship of the Kuki-Chins and the British government, dealt with at the end of the first chapter, has shown that the British administrators envisaged the plan of merging the Chin Hills of Burma and the Lushai Hills area of the Indian Territory into a single administrative unit—a plan that did not, however, materialise. That British contemplation nevertheless inculcated in the minds of the leading Kuki-Chins, particularly of the Lushai Hills, an idea of generating solidarity and awareness of oneness among their people that soon took its shape of a Pan-Kuki-Chin movement that one observes in the formation in 1946 (just on the eve of the British quit of India) of the first political party, namely the Mizo Union (earlier Mizo Commoners' Union when it was devoted to the task of emancipating the common people of the Lushai Hills from the autocratic exploitations by the Sailo Chiefs; it was also its ambition to change the name of their land and people from Lushai Hills to Mizoram and Lushai to Mizo, a dream that became a reality in 1954), and its advocacy for the unification of all the Kuki-Chin (yo in the Lushai expression) inhabited areas within India and Burma into one administrative territory. In 1947 another political body called the United Mizo
Freedom Organisation was formed at Aizawl with the aim of amalgamating the Lushai Hills with the Chin Hills under Burma, but the demand was not considered.

The Kuki-Chins unification movement was faced with obstacles not only from without but from within. It suffered from the inherent internal tribal atomisations; this internal crisis is the negative side of the intra-ethnic relations of this group of people till today. On the other hand, the unification movement taken lead by the Mizos has been followed suit now and then in variable scales by a few more Kuki tribes of Manipur, too. Their internal ethnic relations may thus be held to be going on a cyclic pattern of fusion and fission. But in Manipur in particular fusion in their case exists only on the ideological level, simply as tendency, and every occasion of tendency toward fusion remains tangential only giving way to fissions. And frequencies of fissions outsacle tendencies toward fusion. All those observations are illustrated in what follows here below.

4. 2 Hmar Tribal Nationality

The case of the Hmars offers the first incident of separate tribal identification among the Kukis of Manipur and Lushai Hills. They achieved their separate tribal identity before 1900 on the Indian soil. The name ‘Hmar’ is a toponym, applied to the northerners by the southerners. Above (vide supra: 14) one has come across that this word is used in Chin Hills in this meaning. Same is
case with its application in Mizoram (when it was called Lushai Hills) where the Old Kukis in northern Mizoram bordering southern Manipur were Hmar to the Lushais living in the south. They adapt this word as the name of their tribe which is composed of 39 sub-tribes (vide infra: 221, Appendix-V) many of which were formerly certain sundry clans or lineages of the Old Kukis while some were sections of different ethnic groups. For instance, Thek that occurs as one of the sub-tribes or clans of the Hmar is another name of the Sak or Kadu whose tongue is classified as a different language from Kuki-Chins though both belong to the general Tibeto-Burman language family. Chakma is another such case.

Initially the Hmar were under the shadow of the Lushai (Mizo). When Christianity was introduced in the Hmar-inhabited areas of southern Manipur, Cachar and Northern Cachar Hills (Assam) Mizo language was the medium of worship. Politically also they were very much influenced by the Mizo Union movement of Lushai Hills which started in 1946. The Hmars of Manipur looked to Mizoram for their future. So, they rejected the Regional Council offered to them by the Government of Manipur in 1949.

They hoped for the inclusion the Hmars inhabited areas of Manipur and Cachar valley and North Cachar Hills of Assam in the formation of the Lushai Hills District of Assam. But to their disappointment the Mizo Union leaders accepted creation of the said district only out of the Lushai Hills area. They felt it
to be a bolt from the blue. Indeed it was a bitter experience of the Hmar, which, however was a boon in disguise because it made their tribal separatism more prominent. In 1956 in Manipur the Hmar became recognized by the Government of India as one of the Scheduled Tribes of the State of Manipur. Thereafter, again, the Hmars were on the path of joining hands with the Mizo Union in its movement for Greater Mizoram but with no success. Now, the Hmars retreated to strengthening their individual tribal identifications. Resultantly, the political body called the Hmar National Union came up to safeguard the Hmar identity. Subsequently, the Hmar People’s Convention emerged launching movements (1986-1994) for the creation of Autonomous Regional Council in north Mizoram exclusively for the people.

The Hmars have developed their own dialect and maintain their separate identity. They reject their coverage under any of the ethnic nomenclature like Kuki, Chin, Zomi or Mizo.

4. 3 The Kuki National Association/Assembly

The several sub-communities/clans of the people whom the British administrators collectively recognized as the Kukis, in Manipur except perhaps the Hmars, did not yet officially claim separate tribal identification. During early 1940s the Lushais of Lushai Hills started mobilizing for identifying themselves
collectively as the Mizos inclusive of the other with them in their land. This was surely a unifying movement. On the other hand, the Nagas of the Naga Hills had been demanding in a concerted spirit an independent state of Nagaland. Under these atmospheres of ethnic and political mobilizations prevailing closely around them, the Kukis of Manipur formed the Kuki National Association (KNA) in 1947. Started initially as a social organization the Kuki National Association was soon transformed itself into a political body after changing its name to Kuki National Assembly thereby party assuming which status it dreamt of creating a separate state for the Kukis. All the Kuki sub-tribes/clans were represented in the KNA. Its united entity of all the Kukis did not, however, last long. The founder of the KNA was one Mr. Lunneh, a Thadou Kuki. It was proposed under his leadership to construct a building to be designated ‘Kuki Company’ at Imphal to accommodate the KNA administrative office as well as to provide guest room for the constituent members. The project failed as some dishonest leaders siphoned off a big amount of money from the collected fund. Moreover, many of the members reacted against the undue dominating control of the Thadou-speaking Kukis. On the top of these, the other constituent Kuki communities than the Thadous have developed a sullen attitude of alienation from the Kuki fraternity consequent upon Mr. Jamkithang Sitlhou’s (who claimed to be head of all the Kukis) under-rating some of them as ½ a rupee (makhai) Kuki, i.e., half-Kuki and some others of them as ¼ a rupee (siki) Kuki i.e., one-fourth Kuki. They finally parted with the KNA, it
paving the way for building up a new political forum of their own. Consequently, in 1947 itself the Khulmi Union was born. The KNA has thus been cut to size. It, however, survives till today as a political party. During the mid-1960s it recruited Kuki volunteers to join hands with the rebels of the Mizo National Front (MNF) who were fighting against the Indian Military for the cause of carving out a sovereign Greater Mizoram.

4. 4 The Khulmi Union

As has been indicated above, the Khulmi Union was founded by the defecting Kuki peoples from the Kuki National Assembly leaving alone there only the Thadou. There were 27 peoples under it: Aimol, Anal, Moyon, Monsang, Maring, Mate, Chiru, Chothe, Hmar, Vaiphei, Gangte, Smite, Manlun, Manchong, Koireng, Kom, Purum, Lamgang, Baite, Lhanghal, Lunkim, Changsan, Lhangum, Lenthang, Paite, Saum-Doungel and Zou. Their newly formed union is called Khulmi, meaning ‘men of cave origin;’ all these peoples have cave-origin tradition.

The Executive Body of the Khulmi Union was composed of: 1) Dr. Kampu (Gangte), 2) Thangkhai (Paite), 3) Tawna (Hmar), 4) Angnal (Anal), 5) Toma (Moyon), 6) Namdir (Moyon), 7) Mono (Monsang), 8) Demzakhai (Vaiphei), 9) Holpao (Mate), 10) Lampum (Gangte) and 11) Khaikam.
4. 5 The Komrem Union and the Pakan Union

Meanwhile, a scene of self assertion of the Kom tribe emerged within the organization of the Khulmi Union itself; this trend culminated in the formation of the Komrem Union in 1949 by the Koms in alliance with their closest relatives, the Aimols, Chirus, Chothes, Koirengs, Purums, Kharams and Taraos. This step of ethnic formation of the Kom was soon followed suit by the Anals and their cognate tribes, namely the Lamkangs, Moyons and Monsangs under the name of Pakan Union in 1950.

4. 6 Final blow to the Khulmi Union

Manipur got independence from the British rule in 1947, but it was merged to the Indian Union only in 1949. During this period Manipur had its own constituent Assembly. Election to the Assembly was held in 1948. Only two KNA candidates, namely Lunneh Thadou and Thanggoumang Kipgen got elected whereas the Khulmi Union begged seven seats. The elected candidates of the Khulmi Union were: 1) Dr. Kampu (Gangte), 2) T. Tiankham (Paite), 3) Tualchin (Zou), 4) Teba Kilong (a Kom candidate), 5) Mono (Anal), 6) Holpao (Mate) and 7) Demzakhai (Vaiphei). The Khulmi Union evidently got the upper hand in public acceptance.
With the expiry of the State Government consequent upon the merger of Manipur to the Indian Union, the Khulmi Union started suffering internal conflict. The first instance of its internal turbulence was the preparations of the Kom to assert their separate tribal identity. The first Lok Sabha election of 1952 in Manipur, now as an integral part of India, intensified the disintegrating tendency in the Khul Union. One Thangkhai Paite was in the fray of election for the lone seat of the Outer Manipur Parliamentary Constituency. His candidature was turned down on the ground that Paite was not in the list of recognized tribes (all the Kuki communities of Manipur there were collectively recognized as a Scheduled Tribe of Manipur under the expression ‘Any Kuki Tribe’). It may be recalled here that the Paites had disowned the word Kuki as their name at the advent of the collapse of the Kuki National Assembly. So, rejection of Thangkhai Paite’s candidature on the plea that he did not file his nomination as a Kuki flared up communal hysteria in the entire Churachandpur area (now a District of Manipur) from where he filed his nomination paper. According to T. Gougin (1984:218) it was a consequence of this occasion that the Paite National Council was newly formed in 1956 under the leadership of Thangkhai Paite to ignite the Paite ethnicity. The other Kuki communities of the KNA also joined the chorus of protesting against Kuki as their collective ethnic nomenclature, and thereby withdrew themselves from the KNA.
4.7 The Paite National Council

While echoing J. Shakespear’s report (1912:143) H. Kamkhentang (1988:9) fixes the arrival of the Paites in Manipur in 1870 under the leadership of Sumkam, the Guite Chief. This people or at least their ethnonym ‘Paite’ has historical root in the Central Chin Hills of erstwhile Burma and its western adjoining area. ‘Paite’ is an exonym given to this people by the Lushais. By this name the Lushais referred to the population living between Falam of Central Chin Hills and the Lushai Hills after the Lushai settled at the Lushai Hills. So naming the people after their migrating habit, as is so claimed by some writers, seems to be inappropriate; migratory habit is the general characteristics of the Kukis, let alone the Paites. G. A. Grierson’s view (1967:81) sounds to bear more historical logic; he put forward: “......the Lushais call all the hill tribes who wear their hair in a knot upon the top of the head Pai or Poi....... most of the central and southern Chin tribes tie their hairs up in this way. The Pois of the southern Lushai Hills all speak dialect belonging to the central Chin sub-group. A thousand individuals in the northern Lushai Hills have been returned as speaking Paite. This word is simply the plural of Pai or Poi, mentioned above, and Paite should accordingly be supposed to be a Central Chin dialect”. Grierson’s further view (ibid: 107) that the Zahaos and Whenohs (Hualngos) also are originally Pois, Poi-tes and Pai-tes is probably quite acceptable.
Now the Central Chin origin of Paite, in so far as the name so suggests, is clear beyond any doubt. But, it was not used for quite long time in history. The reason is that they identified themselves then after the names of the clans of their chieftains. H. Kamkhenthang (ibid: 9) provides interesting information in this regards: “The ruling clans before the British came were the Suktes and the Guites. These two chiefly clans of Paite were affines. The Guites were the wife-givers and the Sukte were the wife-takers. The Guites ruled in area north of the Suktes and the Suktes ruled in area south of the Guites.” They adapted themselves to a kin-based political system in which either Guite or Sukte was the dominant/chieflly clan. We have no access to that detailed history of how they fell upon this yielding adaptation to the Guites and the Suktes. It was under this circumstance that they went by the names of Guite and Sukte. Till today Guite is the head clan of the Paite at least in Manipur. This is why for a long time the name Paite was not popularly accepted by the people themselves.

Meanwhile, it cannot but be expressed that the established central origin of the Paites induces one to make clarification on a vital point. In his introductory note of his book *The Paite* Kamkhenthang expresses his smack of a predilection of identifying the Paites in India with the Tedim Chins i.e., the Northern Chins of Burma. One surely feels that this equation of the two people would run far short of liberation from the old obsession of the Paites themselves to surrender even their
original historical identity. The Guites and the Suktes are undoubtedly Tedim or Northern Chins. And their subjects, the Paites of Central Chin origin may have settled in history in Tedim area under the sceptre of the Guites and Suktes. But, now they have revived at any rate their history of originating from central Chin Hills, the land of the Pois. They are now the Paites, the Po people. It is just a repetition of history, a fact of history.

Meanwhile Government of India set up the Kaka Kalekar Commission in 1953 to update the list of recognized Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes of India. Before it the Kuki communities of Manipur were collectively dumped under the single expression “Any Kuki Tribes.” The said commission recommended, of course, on the demands of the individual communities, for official recognition of the separate identities of these communities. Consequently, in the amended list of recognized Scheduled Tribes of the Constitution of India, 1956 there figure as many as 21 tribes that may be, at least historically, treated as of general Kuki background. Those 21 tribes are: Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Koieng, Kom, Lamgang, Any Mizo (Lushai Tribe), Maring, Monsang, Moyon, Paite, Purum, Ralte, Simte, Sukte, Thadou, Vaiphei, and Zou.

Under the hectic Naga ethnic aggrandisation of the late 1950s and 1960s encouraged by the aforesaid step of regrouping tribal communities of Manipur by the Government of this state, the Marings swung to the Naga fold of ethnic
identity. The name of Maring Naga Baptist Association founded in 1965 as their ecclesiastical organization evidently bears testimony to this shift of the Marings ethnic alignment. Earlier, as has been observed above, this people were a member community of the Khulmi Union (1947) of the Kukis. What is more, the Marings were called Pois while they had been settled in the area of Chin Hills of Burma.

The formal recognition of these communities as the Scheduled Tribes of Manipur gave an impetus to these people in generation and regeneration newer and greater self-conscious among these individual tribes. Prolonged impact of this trend of attenuated individual tribal self-identification may be correlated with the breaking down of such cases of alliances of closer cognate tribes as the Komrem Union and the Pakan Union.

4.8 Cremating of Komrem Union.

Fragmentation of Komrem Union set afoot with the logic of non-representation of the other constituent member tribes than the Koms in the name itself of this union. This expression Komrem (a blending of the two words ‘kom’ and ‘rem’) literally mean Kom tribal people. The protest was first raised by the Koireng, one of the constituent member tribes. Their argument is that the Kom tribe alone cannot represent the other tribes involved in this union. Further, the name ‘Semte Tribal Union’ was suggested in lieu of Komrem Union on the
ground so justified as taking in special account of the word sem, root of the word ruosem or gosem for their peculiar bagpipe-like musical instrument (a structure with 5 or 7 bamboo pipes fitted to a gourd-wind bag: vide infra: 262-263, Figure No. 31 and 36) which is an index cultural trait for the collectively of all the tribes in point. Sem literally means ‘to blow’ and te, the people or descendants; so, semte means people who have the tradition of blowing this unique musical instrument.

The proposal was, however, turned down by the Kom leaders. The non-Kom member tribes of this union took this reaction of the Kom leaders to be undue Kom dominance in the union, which to the former could in no case be compromised with. Thereupon the Semte Union was formed, barring membership of the Kom of which a Chiru leader named Alar Thoitak was the President, R. Rithang of Koireng was the Secretary and Akhup Serto (Aimol) was the joint Secretary. This union could not survive any longer after three years of its existence. In the meantime the Komrem Union was revived, however, with the move out this time of the Koireng. The Koireng tribe had already formed their separate organization in 1987, named the Koren Tribe Union. The newly revived edition of the Komrem Union has again shattered.
4.9 The Fate of the Pakan Movement.

The Pakan movement was initiated by a powerful Moyon chief of the then Tengnoupal District (now Chandel District). The protagonists of this movement claimed on the basis of their tradition that the Moyon, Monsang, Lamkang and Anal tribes were originally called Pakan. It could be a genuine historical tradition of the peoples. This movement could not, however, sail smoothly since its inception. Initially it could not get support from the Anals, the major component unit thereof on the ground that the movement was initiated and led by the smaller tribes. But, in during the late sixties when the wild fire of the Naga underground activities spread over the Anal-inhabited areas of Manipur, the Anal leaders took interest afresh in the Pakan Union because they thought under its banner they could embrace the Moyons, Monsangs and Lamkangs under their leadership in giving support to the Naga insurgency. But, quite against their expectation, the Moyons and Monshangs withdrew their membership from the Pakan Union as they realized the ulterior motive of the Anal leaders. As a result, now, only the Anals were left in the main under the Pakan fold. What was more; the Anals themselves became divided into two factions over the Pakan issue: the Pakan-Anals and the non-Pakan Anals. No doubt over time these two factions could manage to come to reconciliation; but, it was a story of the unification of Anals,
still short of the return of the Moyon, Monsang and Lamkang to the movement for Pakan fraternity.

4. 10 The Zomi Movement of Manipur

The word ‘Zomi’ appears to stand for rather a movement for replacement of Kuki or Chin as the generic name of all the tribes so far expeditiously classified, as so alleged the Zomi favourites, under the expression Kuki-Chins. Needles to repeat here the arguments of this movement contended in favour of this ethnic nomenclature it has proposed; the necessary points have already been highlighted in the first chapter of the present work. As such the word ‘Zomi’ does not represent a concrete reality of collectivity; if at all it has to be regarded as a group; it is more a notional group. Nor does the group it construes stand as a discrete tribe of the Kukis in Manipur, as contrasted with the Zo in the Chin Hills of Myanmar where their distinct tribal identity has been recognized by the other Chin peoples of that region. In Manipur a constellation of cross-Kuki tribal individuals claim themselves as Zomi; they do not claim their recognition as a separate tribe, their objective is to change the collective, generic name of the entire nationality from Kuki or Chin or even Kuki-Chin to Zomi, and they have been mobilizing to achieve this goal by setting up an organization called the Zomi National Congress.
4.11 The Zomi National Congress, 1972

The Zomi National Congress was founded on the 21st January 1972, at Daijang Village of Churachandpur District. As has been pointed out above its aim is to unite all the Zomi ethnic groups under a common political platform. It was founded by T. Gougin who became the 1st president of the newly established political forum, and Semkhopau Samte was the founding Secretary. The ZNC submitted a memorandum to the Honourable President of India. Mr.V.V. Giri during his august visit to Churachandpur in 1972. The two leaders highlighted the common aspirations of the newly floated ethnic political forum before the president.

A special Assembly of the Zomi National Congress was convened at Zoveng Churachandpur from 8th-9th July, 1983. All members of the Zoumi youths and students across the country participated in the special Assembly. The president highlighted the political goals to the dignitaries present in the session. He appealed specially to the student community to spearhead the ZNC movement with a solid stand. The same day the session unanimously resolved to maintain the unity of the Zomi under the same nomenclature “The Zomi National Congress.” Resolution to this effect was initiated by L.S Gangte. He strongly suggested the validity of the nomenclature ZNC with his philosophical conclusion. All supported the view and the resolution was thus adopted. Mr. Gangte, however, sounded a note of warning
that ‘even if we win the best nomenclature today it may not serve any purpose unless we work for it.’ He appealed to the audience to accept Zomi National Congress as the common political party for all Zomis of Zoram or Zogam.

The congress had tremendous achievements during 1983 and 1984; the said achievements were as follows:

1) A Memorandum was submitted to the Prime Minister of India for the creation of a Union Territory for the Zomis as per the resolution adopted by the supreme council of the ZNC on the 4th December, 1983.

2) Grass root campaign of unity under ZNC began from September 1983.

3) By July 1984, 60-ZNC Units were established in the Churachandpur District.

4) On 14th August 1984, a formal inauguration of ZNC Unit at Thanlon block was done by Gengoukhup, MDC, who was the Chief Guest of the solemn function.

5) The draft constitution of Zomi National Congress was circulated during the block inaugural function at Thanlon on the 14th August, 1984.

6) The President and the General Secretary were deputed as delegates to meet the Indian leaders in connection with the demand for their union territory.
With the passage of time, the Zomi National Congress Party also gained momentum towards their goal attainment. Eventually, the Party was struck by Assembly election which was held in December, 1984. The Party had a mixed thought over the issue of contesting the election. They took almost 30 days to resolve whether to contest the election or wait for the next chance. Finally, they decided to contest the Assembly election and put up one Thangkhangin Ngaiite as its candidate. But, the party candidate was defeated in the election. The reason for the defeat was attributed to the divided opinion and hostility among the members over the primary choice of two candidates in the fray.

However, student groups in various cities and institutions started to adopt Zomi for their collective name in Shillong, Delhi, Pune, Bangalore and other cities. They seem to be a perfect Zomi so long as they are away from home and exposed this new identity of theirs to the outsiders. They feel the need of having a common name for the different tribes when they are with people of different cultures. Some individual members from each group are advocating Zomi as their generic name. A good number of persons in each tribe accepted it. Only the Paite group looked at the movement with ambivalence.

There are some people among the Thadous, Gangtes, Vaiphes, Suktes, Sintes, Hmars & Paites, who accept Zomi for their nomenclature. While accepting the term Zomi there has been, however, an organizational misunderstanding
between Zomi National Congress, and the Paite National Council which was established in 1946. The Paite National Council was a political forum exclusively meant only for the Paite speakers. Zomi is accepted among the Paites in principle, but not as a member of the Paite National Council. In reality, the Paite National Council does not like to accept the policy and the working system of the ZNC.

The two organizations usually slur against each other as they are antagonists to each other at the organizational level. In addition to the existing antagonism between the Paite National Council and the Zomi National Congress, all of the Paite individuals are not loyal to either the PNC or the ZNC.

Likewise, the Thadous have now discarded Kuki. Kuki as a generic name of the people would be incomplete without the participation of the Thadous, Hmar, Paite, Gangte, etc. and without them there is less chance of its survival. Zomi is accepted by more people than Kuki among the Chin-Kuki tribes (H. Kamkhenthang 1990:288). The discord between PNC and ZNC is unfortunate in as much as it is so between the Thadous and the Kukis. The acceptance of Zomi is retarded by the discord between Paite National Council and Zomi National Congress as the acceptance of Kuki is marred by the dispute between Thadou and Kuki.
Inspite of the antagonism between the Paite National Council and the Zomi National Congress, the desire for making Zomi as collective generic name is still felt among the people. The other constituent partners of Zomi have apprehension that Paite may monopolize Zomi if the Paite National Council accepts it for common name. Common acceptance of ZNC is not possible for the PNC, except for the individual acceptance. There is also likelihood that the Thadous will accept Zomi if they are not re-integrated with the Kukis. Zomi is also incomplete without the participation of the Thadous and the Paites.

The acceptance of Zomi by the Thadous and allied tribes will be only on the basis of its approach to Kuki nomenclature. Even if the so-called Chins and New Kukis accept Zomi or Kuki, the fate of the people who are called by anthropologists Old Kukis will be still hanging on the balance as they are still oscillating between the Kuki and Naga continuum. Hence the search for common identity is all the time a problem among this group of people.

4. 12 Tribes of Kuki-Chin who are still seeking status of Scheduled Tribe in Manipur:

4. 12. 1 The Chongthu Case

The Chongthu, one of the major sections of the Kuki-Chins, assert their tribal identity after leaving Thadou, name of the tribe to which they were
identified for the past many years. The contention of the Chongthu protagonists is that Thadou was their great grand son at the 8th descending generation in the direct line from Chongthu (vide infra: 195, Appendix-I). Therefore, it is improper for them to identify them under the wing of Thadou any more.

Having felt the pulse of separate identity formation, one of their powerful leaders, T. Holkhosei Chongthu initiated the demand for Chongthu as a separate ethnic entity, and to achieve the goal he founded an organisation called the United Chongthu Tribe Organisation, North East India in 1959. Since its inception; UCTO has rendered commendable welfare services to the community in question. ‘The Chongthu Tribe Recognition Demand Committee,’ one of the organs of the UCTO has been actively engaged in demanding elevation of ‘Chongthu’ to the status of a Scheduled Tribe. The organization submitted a number of representations to both State and Central Governments to fulfill their demands.

While the process for recognition was in active progress the ‘Thadou Tribe Council’ raised strong objection to the move, which derailed the aspirations of the people. The Thadou, however, could not give any valid reason for their opposition. Then the Chongthu elders formally approached the leaders of the ‘Thadou Tribe Council’ for their consent over the demand ceaselessly. Now, their plea has been considered.
Chongthu was the great progenitor of a large number of the Kuki-Chin people. After many of the constituent members had departed in pursuance of their personal interests, only 9 clans were left under the Chongthu; they are: Guite, Doungel, Milhem, Houlai; Lotzem, Dimngel, Kilong, Touthang and Tuboi. But, due to different reasons the first three clans also have followed the others. They left the company of the Chongthu and assumed their ethnic affiliation with the tribes of their choice. The Guite who are thought to be the eldest in the genealogical table of Chongthu (vide infra: 195, Appendix-I) declined to endorse their membership in the Chongthu Tribe Demand Committee because of the fact that they were already included as the head of clans of the Paite Tribe. The Paite National Council also made a repeated appeal to the United Chongthu Tribe Organisation to exclude Guite from the list of Chongthu clans. The request was accepted but the Guites residing in the districts other than Churachandpur still have their alliance with the Chongthuses. After the Guites' withdrawal, the Doungels, as a head next to the Guites, was expected to lead the Union, but they fail to do so because of the inherent misunderstanding between them and the Touthangs, one of the constituent partners of the Union. The Doungels turn their face away from the Chongthuses and become one of the constituent members of the proposed ‘Any Kuki Tribes,’ following which Lotzem now becomes the head of the Chongthu Union.
Then Milhem Union which comprises of Misao, Lupheng, and Lupho who were once members of the United Chongthu Tribes Organisation left the Union and has embraced 'Any Kuki Tribe.' Legend has it that Hangmipa, their progenitor, was a powerful cabinet in the migrating band of Chongthu. He was a fearless warrior and was responsible for killing the ferocious dragon while the party came out from the mythical cave. They argued that Hangmipa was a man contemporary in age to Chongthu who has no genealogical connection with him. This, according to them, is the reason for their flouting ties with the Chongthu.

In the face of these circumstances the process of recognition was further belated by the internal dissention which was started when a few sections within the same community raised an objection to adoption of Chongthu as a common nomenclature of this people. They are of the opinion that, the original name of this people from the time of their cave dwellings was Shongthu and not Chongthu. They have submitted a number of representations to the Government of Manipur for rectification of the standing orders which favours the adoption of the name Chongthu/Shongthu together. As the matter became a point of discord between the two groups of the same people the Government of Manipur finally decided to form an expert sub-committee on the subject to ascertain the authenticity of either of the terms. Accordingly, the sub-committee headed by Dr. M. Horam, Chairman of the Hill Areas Committee as Chairman, and three expert members: Prof. Ch.
Budhi Singh, HOD, Department of Anthropology, Manipur University and Dr. H. Kamkhenthang, Deputy Director Research, Tribal Development Department Government of Manipur and M. Thorii, Minister, Tribal Development, were deputed to do the needful. After intensive research the committee finally recommended *Chongthu* to the Government of Manipur for all practical purposes at its meeting held at the office room of the Hill Areas Committee, Manipur Legislative Assembly on the 12th May 1997. Their findings and recommendation on the question of the nomenclature of *Chongthu* or *Shongthu* which appeared in *The Chongthuses of Manipur* (2003:178-179) are reproduced as:

"The term *Chongthu* and *Shongthu* are found synonymously used among the descendants of this eponymous ancient ancestor to refer to the said originator. Linguistically, the two terms would be simply phonetically variable renderings, which can thereby be interchangeably used, of the personal name of the common progenitor. This phonetic variation further appears to be sterile of telling implicitly about any significant internal traditional, cultural or customary difference among the people.

"It is, however, observed that each of the two expressions is used more popularly in the specific areas and communities of its domain of application within the Chin-Kuki-Mizo world. Thus, Chongthu is used by the speakers of Thadou (Kuki) and Hmar in Manipur and Lushai (Mizo) in Mizoram and Kuki in Assam
whereas Shongthu is used by only the Paite (Tedim Chin) speakers of Indo-Burma borderland in Churachandpur and Chin State of Burma.

"The above regional difference of the use of the two appellations leads one to point out the fact that Chongthu is much more preponderantly used on Indian side....This final observation of the significantly greater popularity of nomenclature Chongthu on the Indian side, veritably induces one to finally endorsed the view that in so far as the question arises itself in the context of the people living in the Indian Territory, the said nomenclature namely Chongthu deserves formal recognition as name of the people under consideration. In the light of the above findings the committee unanimously recommends Chongthu and not Songthu to the Government of Manipur for necessary action." The government of Manipur, accordingly, sent its recommendations for recognition of Chongthu as a separate Scheduled Tribe to the Central Government. Thus the process assumed a new face and the matter is now pending with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs Government of India.

4.12.2 The Mate Case

The Mate, another small section of this people, initially clubbed themselves with the Gangte. Today a section of them who inhabit the former Tengnoupal District claim themselves to have a distinct ethnic origin from the Gangte. They
shake off their old alliance with the Gangte and have registered their demand for the separate status of Scheduled Tribe. This move was strongly opposed by the Mates of Churachandpur District who are still firm with their alliance to the Gangte tribe. They even sought court adjunction to oppose the move for recognition of the separate status of the people, but no concrete verdict is given till date. In the face of these confusions the Government of Manipur had recommended the case of Mate for separate status of Scheduled Tribe to the Ministry of Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Government of India in 1998. The discord over identity issue of the Mates has further been complicated by the recent trend of excluding some of their clans from the list of proposed recognition drive by the protagonist of the Mate tribe demand committee.

4. 12. 3 The Khoibu Case

Khoibu was a lesser known section of people until recently. They have been clubbed with the Maring tribe since time immemorial. Khoipu leaders have now argued that in spite of their inclusion in the list of the tribes of Manipur prepared by the Dewan of Manipur State way back in 1949, their long association with their neighbouring community, the Marings; have resulted in the loss of their rich separate traditions. So, they started demanding Khoibu as a separate tribal entity aloof from the Maring in 2001. This move was strongly opposed by the Marings as a result of which there was a conflict between the two communities even to the
extent of physical assaults. The early interventions of the Committee for Demand of Tribe Recognitions, Manipur, to which the Khoipu is also a member averted major catastrophe.

4.13 The Old Kukis toward Naga Fraternity.

During the period of deep internal crisis of identity among the Kukis, the Naga National movement achieved rapid progress, with a strong desire to form a Naga Nationalism. The Nagaisms or Nagaisation process had converted the bridge buffer communities who were oscillating between the Naga and the Kuki-Chin constellations into the Naga fold. There are a number of such smaller tribes known anthropologically as Old Kuki tribes who are called so, because of the fact that they were found in Manipur earlier than the so called Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes, and secondly, they have greater affinities to the late comers who are their cognate tribes, than to the Naga tribes.

Ethnic transformation of the Old-Kukis goes along the line of political loyalty of the tribes concerned. They are also motivated to some extent by the Naga Movement or the Naga politics. They are culturally Chin-Kuki, domestically Meitei and politically Naga (H. Kamkhenthang 1990: 279). R.K. Ranjit and A. C Bhagabati (1980) stated that small tribes like Anal, Moyon, and Monsang were influenced by the Tangkhuls to be Naga by inducting them to Naga Movement.
The Tangkhul Nagas are taking the leading role in transforming the tribes under Naga ethnic label by different agencies (R.K. Das, 1984:18). The Marings, who are called Pawi in Falam and Haka areas of Chin state of Myanmar, are now Naga under the influences of the Tangkhul Baptist Association whose evangelists, teachers and Pastors have been working among the Marings. Cultural activists of All Manipur Naga Student’s Association led by Tangkhul students were regularly conducted to foster socio-cultural interactions among the newly formed ethnic community. Sometimes opinions are divided as to which of the Kuki or the Naga group they should belong. The Kuki group had a common harvest holiday as the State Holiday that falls on the 1st November. The Nagas are not having a common holiday recognized by the Government as state holiday until recently. In order to create a state holiday for the Naga tribes of Manipur, the ‘Seed Sowing Festival’ was enacted and 15th February is now declared state holiday for this Naga Festival.

It is a fact that some of the Old Kuki tribes, who took part in the ‘Kut’ Festival as a Kuki tribe, also took part in the ‘Seed Sowing’ Festival as Naga tribes. Thus, some of them are not in a position to determine whether they will be Naga or remain as Old Kukis. One of such ambivalent tribes is the Chothe. A few young people have advocated that they are Naga, but they actually don’t know what criteria would make them Naga. The majority within the tribe objected to identify themselves as Naga. A section of them wanted the Chothe Christians to be
recognized and registered as Chothe Naga Baptist Association. This move was strongly objected by another section of this people. They are of the opinion that it should remain as Chothe Baptist Association. It is alleged further that the word Naga was inserted in a big stone slab erected to mark the Chothe Christian Association under the influence of Manipur Baptist Convention headed by Naga tribes. Thus there appended the word ‘Naga’ to their original tribal name. For instance, their Christian denomination is named the Chothe Naga Baptist Association. The Chothe majorities strongly oppose the inscription and the dispute is yet to be settled.

The Anals, Aimols and some other tribes of Old Kuki ethnic background prefer to call themselves as Naga (Das, 1984:15). The Marings who are more closed to the Pawis of Mizoram, and the Hakas and the Falams of the Chin State of Myanmar have forgotten their original connection with them. Majority of them are now found in favour of their affiliation with the Naga.

No other tribe in Manipur has been faced with the problem of identity than the Anals and their allied tribes. The situation in which they are now put may have been caused by the natural desire of a minority to have an identity at community status as well as political aspirations in common with a major group. The Anals and their allied smaller groups, namely the Moyon, Monshang, Lamkang and Tarao occupy such a geographical situation that they are sandwiched between the
Nagas on the north and the Kuki-Chins on the south (G. Kabui 1985:50). This had naturally produced constraints on their group identity. An element of complication about the identity problem is injected by the British administrators who were themselves not sure of the identity of Anals in relation to the bigger neighbours, the Kukis or the Nagas. The British colonial rulers applied a broad yardstick of grouping a tribe with the Kuki or Naga fold. The British Officials who wrote on the tribes of Manipur were confused about the true ethnic identity of the Anals. While someone called them Naga, the others called them Old Kuki tribe.

The Anal themselves were not clear about their ethnic identification upto the colonial period. Racially they are not much different from either the Kukis or the Nagas. The migration story tells of the close association of the Anals with the forefathers of the Kukis.

During the time of the British rule the Anals appear to have had closer association with the Kuki group due to their frequent interactions with the Christian evangelical leaders who worked among the Anals and allied tribes. These evangelical workers were from the Kuki group not from the Naga group. However, the confusion persisted throughout the British colonial period as the Anals were described in some administrative reports, even revenue and judicial records, as both Kuki and Naga. But the Pro-Kuki tendency had greatly dwindled away years before the British retreat from the country that there was an upsurge
for an intensive search of identity among this tribal people. This was manifested in
the founding of the tribal socio-political organisations. As a fall out of this
phenomenon, the Analns appear to have made a major step in drifting away from the
Kukis and newly assert Naga identity for them.

The considerations which have been made on this people are the fidelity of
their political aspirations with the Nagas. Close similarity in their traditional
political organisation with that typical of the Nagas is another key factor for
embracing Naga identity. Like many Naga political systems, they have elected or
nominated chiefship and ownership of the lands i.e. land not belonging to the chief.
It may be noted, however, that the Analns have undoubted linguistic and cultural
affinity with the Kukis. In one of the two Anal moieties, namely the Mulchal moiety
one finds four clans- Darzal, Khumlo, Vango and Vangsul, occurring as the names
of four constituent lineages of the Mate community of the Kuki-Chins (vide infra:
233-235, Appendix-V. 20). Unlike other Naga tribes, the Kuki Chin speaking so-
called Naga tribes do not have the tradition of their Makhel origin.

It is seen from the above narration that Naga is a generic name getting its
wide acceptance from different tribes for their common new name. In case of Kuki
though it is applied from two directions, linguistic and politics, it achieved no
popular acceptance yet. Many tribes who were supposed to accept Kuki have
disowned this ethnonym and are now searching for a new name for generic application to them.

4.14 The Conflicts

Manipur is currently caught in the ethnic quagmire with three dominant elite groups of the Meitei, Kuki and Naga indulging in a systematic and articulated campaign of ethnic assertion and consolidation in the process of expanding their respective spheres of influence. The dominant elite of every ethnic group strives to create, consolidate and expand its respective exclusive sphere of influence as a consequence of which a conflict situation emerges.

Here the term exclusive sphere of influence refers to the exclusive areas of jurisdiction where a specific elite group has the monopoly to exercise its influences over others effectively. The conflict situations gets worsen owing to the uneven formations of the middle class elites of the three ethnic groups and the subsequent development of a competitive solidarity among them.

The ethnic conflict can be categorized into two types viz, (a) inter-ethnic group conflict and (b) intra-ethnic group conflict. The former is a conflict between the dominant elites of two or more different ethnic groups while the later is a conflict between the dominant elite and the aspirant elite within the same ethnic group. Inter ethnic group conflict finds expression in the forms of ethnic clashes
and ethnic cleansing, whereas intra-ethnic group conflict is characterized by emergence of various armed groups which lead to factionalism and factional clashes.

Today we witness the process of ethnicisation with the middle class elites as the moving force behind it. The emergence of middle class elites in all the ethnic groups of the state has resulted in unorganized form of contest. When the conflict is re-enforced by a well articulated cultural elements and supported by the economic structure of the society, organized armed groups emerge on ethnic lines pursuing their respective ethnic aspiration.

Thereafter, ethnic conflict becomes more intensified as the contest between the competing elites of concerned ethnic groups turned but in the form of direct military confrontation. Such direct ethnic clashes consolidated the identity and solidarity of the contending ethnic groups. In such a situation contesting claims over the same territory constitute the crux of the conflict. Imposition of identity by the dominant ethnic group over the weakers becomes regular pattern of events which also bread conflict. The dominant elite groups in order to legitimize their ethnic mobilizations have employed selective ideologies like history, language, religion, culture, ethnicity, identity, human rights and international laws. However, ethnic nationalism based on the doctrine of right to self-determination is the most dominant ideology being successfully articulated by the dominant elites.
In fact, ideologies are inevitably essential for mobilizing the masses and for gaining recognition or consent from the people. It also helps to elicit international support by projecting the movement as legally justified and politically correct.

Hence, ethnicity or ethnic consciousness turns out to be only an ideological tool invented by the elites for achieving their stated socio-cultural and politico-economic objectives, and, what is more, insurgent organizations are set up as a mere institutional device for the same ends. However, it will be academically worth while to note that emergence of insurgency with a specific ideology has institutionalized the pattern of ethnic conflict in the state of Manipur, and the neighbouring states. This is the origin of identity politics.

Ethnic insurgency aims at achieving certain goals ranging from autonomy to sovereignty. Accordingly, the existing ethnic movements get expression with forms of autonomy movements and the secessionist movements. The latter is the more extreme manifestation of ethnic conflict and ethnic mobilization. In the case of ethnic conflict, “Cease fires” are declared by the insurgent groups and civil society organisations. Here too, conclusion of peace agreements by the apex social organisations representing the warring ethnic groups takes place after a protracted civil strife.
There was a movement for the integration of the Kuki inhabited areas of Manipur in the Lushai Hills to create Greater Mizoram. It may be recalled here that a violent secessionist movement for a sovereign Mizoram was launched by Laldenga as a reaction to the Assamese middle-class which culminated in the passing of the controversial Language Bill, 1960.

The imposition of Assamese language upon the hill tribes generated stiff resistance from the tribal elites. The tribal resistance to the hegemonic design of the Assamese elites found manifested in the hills demanding sovereign independent states which ultimately resulted in the creation of the Indian States Nagaland and Mizoram.

The Mizo armed insurrection led by Laldenga finally came out to an end after the signing of the Mizo Accord leading to the formation of Mizoram as a full fledged state in 1986, within the Indian Union. However, the Kukis of Assam, Tripura, Manipur and Burma (now Myanmar) were left out from the purview of the Political settlement for various reasons. One apparent factor was the clash of interests between the Mizo elites and the Kuki elites. Initially, Laldenga tried to enlist the support of the Kuki inhabiting the neighbouring areas on the card of Independent Greater Mizoram. But, later it turned out to a mere political strategy to broaden his operational base. Then, the failure to materialize the dream of Greater Mizoram induced the disillusioned Kuki of both Myanmar and India to
explore a strategy for insuring their racial survivals that gave birth to the struggle for Zale’n Gam (Kuki homeland) or an independent Kuki Nation. Parallel to this development, another ethnic mobilization in the form of Zo-reunification movement for a unified and independent Zogam of the people has also emerged. The visualized Zale’n Gam or Zogam consists of all the Kuki-Chin-Zomi ethnic groups scattered in the three countries of India, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

In Manipur the expansion of the sphere of influence of the Kuki elites comes into direct clashes with that of Naga elites and the Meitei elites in their inter-ethnic group relationship in this state. This results into the Kuki-Naga clash of the 1990s and armed confrontations between the Kuki and Meitei insurgents from time to time.

The movement for Kuki homeland initiated by the Kuki elites with the objective to carve out their exclusive sphere of influence necessitated to contrive certain ideological strategies for justifying their action by discoursing that the Kuki nation had already existed even before the arrival of the British and they had exercised sovereign authority over their land. Their further points of arguments are: The Kuki nation was arbitrarily divided into India, Myanmar and Bangladesh by the British. The Kukis had fiercely resisted the British Colonial expansion that resulted in the Kuki War of Independence of 1917-1919 and 1943-1945. The Meitei nation state had been already conquered by the British in 1891 while the
Kukis were subjugated only after the Kuki Rebellion. The Kukis were never ruled over by the Meitei. On the contrary, the Kuki had extended military assistance to the Meitei Kings. Zalen-Gam has co-existed side by side with Kangleipak without affecting each other's sovereignty. Therefore, Kangleipak does not have the right to claim and any part of Zalen’Gam. The hill districts of Manipur are neither exclusively inhabited nor dominated by the Naga. That, the categorization of the so called Old Kuki like the Chothe, Anal, Lamkang, Maring, Moyon & Monsang into the Naga fold defies all logics of history, culture, language and ethnicity as they are the same stalk of people to the New Kuki. The Naga have perpetrated heinous atrocities against the Kuki in violation of Human Rights, and the Meitei have exploited the Kuki in various ways in the past and present. Thus, the creation of an autonomous independent homeland exclusively for the Kuki is a prerogative historical right as claimed by the Kuki ethnic community.

The Kuki movement for homeland has been faced with clashes and frictions of interests and also of spheres of influence not only with the Nagas and the Meiteis in Manipur, but also among their own internal tribal groups. The following are the leading cases of internal conflicts within the Kuki ethnic world itself.

The Hmar-Thadou conflict may be traced to possessive imposing character of the movement of the Kuki National Assembly for the creation of the separate Kuki state by setting up its task force, the Kuki National Volunteers. The KNV imposed Kuki fee of rupees ten per household among the various communities of the Kuki-Chins. The Hmar were deadly against the move; they perceived it as an act of subjugation designed by the Singsuan chiefs of the Kuki. The Hmar resistance of the Kuki fee resulted in direct confrontation of the two warring communities. The first case of direct clash between them occurred at Ravazawl, a Hmar village in Tamenglong district in which the Kuki National Volunteers completely razed the village to the ground. The incident occurred at 2 a.m. of February 8, 1960. The Hmar took this event as a great threat to their freedom and retaliated with all their resort. The escalation of the violence was soon spreaded to the neighbouring states of Assam, and then to Mizo and Naga Hills causing a number of casualties and destructions on both sides. The Kuki National Volunteers burnt down Moultluong village in Cachar, Lungtau village in North Cachar Hill district, Tinghmun village in Mizo district. In Manipur as many as eleven Hmar villages were completely wiped off. The Hmar countered actions resulting in burning down of some Thadou villages close to Tipaimukh. The villages like Taithu, Thingkal, Jairawn, Suongsang, Jeikhan, Tuolbung etc, were co-inhabited
by both communities. Some of these villages were burned down by the Thadous themselves after evacuating their families in safer fortresses. Jeikul was one of the fortresses in the Vangai range which was surrounded on all sides by the Hmar villages. The Hmar armed-volunteers launched an ambush at all the strategic points of the fortress. The ensnared including men, women and children numbering three hundred persons could not move out of their houses for several days. But, at last they were rescued by the Assam Rifles safely.

Throwing strong resentment over the partisan attitude of the Government of Manipur, the Hmar National Union submitted a memorandum to the union Home Minister on June 3, 1960. The said representation is reproduced in Laldena’s account of the Hmar-Kuki conflict appeared in his book, *In Search of Identity Hmars of North East-India* (2003:106) as “...the Kukis were supplied with about sixty or seventy arms by the government for their own defense against the hostile Nagas. This supply may be good or legal so far as the Kukis are using these arms against possible attacks from the Naga hostiles. But it is a known fact that the Kukis are using these arms against the Hmars whom they call ‘new Naga hostiles’ since they (Hmars) do not support the Kuki’s claimed for a separate Kuki state.”

At this critical juncture the Haokip Allied Council initiated a bold step for bringing solution to the conflict. The members of the HAC met the representatives of the HNU at Saikot, a Hmar village, on April 30, 1960 and initiated for peaceful
solution to the problem. They were successful in their efforts and the issue was tabled for discussion at the platform of the Hmar National Union and the Kuki National Assembly. The second round of peace meeting was held at Sielmat, Churachandpur on May 6, 1960. In the meeting delegates of the HNU raised their strong discontentment over the question of the inclusion of the Hmar and other smaller tribes ‘under the wing of Thadou,’ according to William Show (1929: 30). The representatives of the KNA clarified that the note being prepared by one of the British officers under the assistance of one or two individuals cannot represent the collective view of the general Kuki populace.

Then one Paolen, chief of Saitu, a member of Manipur Territorial Council, proposed for permanent peace accord. Accordingly major clans and elites of the Kuki-Chins numbering over sixty delegates gathered at Saitu on May 11, 1960 and finally signed peace accord which marked the end of the conflict.

4.14.2 The Kuki–Thadou Controversy

In the past several years the Thadou elites adopted their ethnic designation under the style Thadou-Kuki expecting that their cognate tribes would also follow the same pattern. Being the most populous tribe among the Kuki-Chin tribal groups they took leading role in all the socio-political affairs of the entire Kuki world in such a trend as, as so held in the eyes of the other Kuki Communities,
equating at last the Kuki with the Thadou only. As time passes on, consequently, some of the Old Kukis have entered into the Naga fold. And, the individual Thadou speakers who are not Thadou by tribe are now not any longer willing to be Thadous. They argue that Thadou was an eponymous ancestor for only a limited clans, Thadou was the name of a junior ancestor to which the ancestors of many other Kukis were senior. This is the argument of the descendants of the Chongthus, the Khongsais and the Mates. Their argument is based on the seniority of the Chongthus and the ancestors of the Khongsais and the Mates to the ancestor of the Thadous. So they raised a strong resentment for degrading themselves as junior to the Thadous. Thus the tension between the Thadous on the one hand, and the other Kukis, becomes more expressive.

Until the time when Thadou language, like Paite, Hmar, Tangkhul and Mizo, was recognized by the Government of Manipur as a medium of instruction in high school education, their internal dissentions did not come up to the surface. But now, some sections of the people give pressure to the Government to review the Order by changing name of the language from Thadou to Kuki for purpose of introducing it as the medium of instruction for Kuki students in High School level education.

There have been claims and counter-claims over the nomenclature of the language. The Thadou side claims that their language is spoken since time
immemorial and that there is no particular tribe to be called the Kuki. Therefore, there cannot be a Kuki language. During 1987, the name of the language was renamed Thadou-Kuki by another Order of the Government of Manipur. It states that the Kuki language is to be called Thadou-Kuki for all practical purposes. This step of the Government has, however, little effect in compromising and resolving the issue. The dispute went on.

Today, however, both the Thadou and the Kuki have become separate recognized Scheduled Tribes of Manipur. The name Kuki is recognized not only in Manipur but also in the states of Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Nagaland. The following paragraphs deal with the conflicting situation creep in between the Thadous and the Kukis during the movement for re-recognition of Kuki as a Scheduled Tribe.

Though ‘Any Kuki Tribe’ had been deleted from the Scheduled Tribe list by an order of 1956, it was reinserted by the Government of India on January 7, 2003. It was so effected by the collective efforts of the Kuki Tribes Recognition Demand Committee. Initially, the move was opposed by the Thadou National Council. According to the council, the existing list of Scheduled Tribes of Manipur was good enough as it was prepared to suit the desire of each tribe by modifying the original Order of 1950. They argued that the move would elevate some clans of the Kuki to the status of a tribe and it would cause a psychological
repercussion on their hierarchical position in the group. So, the Thadou National Council raised a serious objection to the move for re-insertion of 'Any Kuki Tribe.'

As a mark of their protest, the Thadou National Council sent a rejoinder to the Prime Minister of India to reject the demands of Kuki Tribe Recognition in Manipur on 14th May, 1987. It expressed, "Firstly it fails to draw distinction between a tribe and a clan, and secondly there are certain communities the bulk of who are strongly opposed to the term 'Kuki' being used and these facts led to the deletion of 'Kuki' by the Government Order in 1956. The Hmars, Paites, and Vaipheis etc. were behind the protest. The protest may be retold as follows: All those reasons which led to the deletion of the generic term Kuki were already before the Central Government when the 1956 Order was issued. Thirdly, the term Kuki is not an indigenous word. It has no meaning at all. There is no dialect/language/custom/tradition/culture to be called Kuki. These same people are known as Chins in Burma, which is a Burmese name applied to them; in Mizoram they are known as Mizos now and it covers all the various tribes such as Thadous, Paites, and Hmars etc. who live in Mizoram. At present some leaders suggest to adopt Mizo in lieu of Kuki while some other again prefer Zomis. It is a situation of uncertainties amongst themselves to bring the name 'Kuki' back by the backdoor and that also through the Government machinery is most undesirable."
Had Kuki been properly accepted from the early period, and then other tribes like the Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Gangte, Zou etc would also involve themselves in the crisis between Thadou and pro-Kuki tribes. But they rather feel that the crisis is purely between the Thadou and the pro-Kuki tribes, and they are not a party to either of them. The Thadou speakers who are not Thadous find it hard to call themselves as Thadou or Thadou-Kuki. They often suggest ironically that they are willing to be Thadou-Kuki if the Paite are willing to be Paite-Kuki, Hmar to be Hmar-Kuki, and so on. But the Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Zou, Gangte, Simte and others do not accept the term Kuki. In such situation, both the Kuki and the Thadou do not like to use Thadou-Kuki as an ethnonym.

4. 14. 3 The Paite-Thadou Conflict

The Intra-ethnic animosity aroused between a section of Thadou speaking Kukis and the Paite community way back in the early 1980s, when a school boy of the Haokip clan of Thadou tribe was accidentally beaten to death by a group of youngsters belonging to the Paite tribe. The issue was communalized and Thadou volunteers from different localities of Churachandpur started to thrash the Paite. In the aftermath of the clashes one Paite was killed and a few others were injured grievously. This may be recorded as the first event of direct confrontation between the Thadous and the Paites, in the annals of the ethnic feuds in Manipur.
Prior to this incident, there had been frequent exchanges of prejudicial statements against each other. For instance, we may quote the common remark that, the Thadou branded the Paite as Thoukang (mosquitoe), while the Paite called the Thadou Holjoh (Charcoal seller). This antecedent atmosphere of prejudice against each other disturbed at large the sentiments of the people which had conceived evils in the minds of both the communities. This preemtied psychological relationship of biasness against each other between the two communities provided the base for the bursting out of the direct physical ethnic clashes between the two immediately following the fatal beating of the Haokip boy by the Paite boys.

The movement for the ethnic level reconciliation was initiated by the Thadou Students’ Association in the early 1990s. It was carried out under the supervision of the Kuki Students’ Organisation. The message was first propagated to the Paite Community through Simsian Pawlpi, a student body. The movement achieved remarkable progress as the community signals a positive nod towards the unification processes. Series of meetings were conducted at different localities. Strategies were chalked out to extend the movement to other close ethnic compatriots of the other districts of Manipur. However, the movement made no headways, following strong objection raised by a section of Khongsais to the
mode representation of the various sections of the people in the Kuki Students' Organisation.

The proposed model elevated KSO to the status of apex students' body. The student forum of each tribe was to be a constituent member to KSO. The executive committee of the core student body was to be constituted by member representatives from all the constituent groups of people. However, the Khongsai felt that they missed the chance of representation in the body as they were not yet a recognized Scheduled Tribe. Thus, the unification could not materialize fully.

Following the collapse of the reconciliation movement, the Paites tried to consolidate their unification move under Zomi. In one of the grand occasions of Zomi Naam Ni (A Day of Zomis), the President of Sinsian Pawlpi addressed the gathering with a historic remark “we were once a Kuki but we are today a true Zomi”. This statement as conceived by the Kukis came in contradiction with the long standing aspiration of bringing all the scattered ethnic communities into a single unified body under the name ‘Kuki.’ The Kuki persuaded at all level best to convince the Paite leaders about this grand idea. But the Paite showed no sign of clubbing together with the Kuki anymore. Far from the expectation of the Kukis they moved for their inclusion in the group of New Naga tribes in Manipur (The Naga National Rights and Movement, 1993:4).
4. 15 Immediate cause of Conflict

The 1980s marked the germinations of various underground elements in Manipur. It was during this time that the Kuki National Front (KNF) made its appearance in the horizon of revolutionary movements. The Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA) appeared in 1990s. Both the groups indulged themselves in demanding separate homelands in the same territory. Thus, armed conflict emerged between them. The protagonists of the Kuki National Front stated that Zomi Revolutionary Army received logistic supply from the NSCN (IM). The KNF took any relation with the NSCN (IM) group was uncalled for and understandable. Therefore, the Front, many times, carried out raids and attacked on the ZRA in the pretext of giving message to shake-off their nexus with the NSCN (IM) and come forward to support the demand for Kuki homeland. But the course of the actions turned into a violent tune, when 10 (ten) Paite youths of Saikul were shot to death by the KNF cadres on the night of June 24, 1997. The KNF said that, the boys were the cadres of the ZRA together with the NSCN (IM). They also claimed to have killed self styled major of the IM in the attack. But the ZRA categorically denied the presence of even a single cadre of the NSCN (IM) in their midst. The unfortunate massacre was retaliated by blazing Kuki houses and killing innocent Kukis in Churachandpur town by the Paites and the Zomis the following morning. The District administration was helpless to control the
magnitude of the impending catastrophe and a similar counter-action came from the Kuki civilians in the District Headquarters area. Slowly, the conflict dragged in many militants from the Kuki and the Zomi armed groups, such as the ZRA, ZNV, KNF, KNF (MC) and KNA. As the conflict continued, other armed groups like the PLA, UNLF, and NSCN (IM) came into the picture for making their presence felt in the conflict. This intensified the situation beyond proportion. As a result the lives of many innocent civilians were lost and several houses were burned or destroyed.

4. 16 Arrival of Good Will Mission and Signing the First MoU.

At this critical juncture a team of MLAs from Mizoram reached Manipur under the banner “Good Will Mission” to expedite peace process in the strife torn District. After a series of meetings with the leaders of the involved communities, the mission was successful in cool down the conflict to a certain degree. On July 7, 1997 a joint appeal signed by T. Samuel Haokip, Defense Secretary, on behalf of President of KNF and JK. Reuben, for the President of ZRA/ ZRO, was made out under the sole witness of the “Good Will Mission”. The excerpt of the appeal goes as, “The recent happening in Churachandpur District was very unfortunate for all communities. On the initiatives of “Goodwill Mission” from Mizoram led by Mr. C. Chongkunga, Minister of Agriculture and his team comprising Mr. H. Zathuama, MLA and Mr. F. Lawmkim MLA, peace could prevail in
Churachandpur District, Manipur, among all the communities. Peace observers were appointed by the above stated ‘Goodwill Mission’ to observe violation of peace and tranquility.”

In consonance with the terms of understanding, known as “APPEAL” which was signed by the representatives of the KNF (Kuki National Front) and the ZRA (Zomi Revolutionary Army) on July 7, 1997 the two groups formed a common platform to sort out all misunderstandings. It was done as a follow up peace initiative, patronized by Pu. C. Chongkunga, Hon’ble Minister of Agricultural Government of Mizoram and his team comprising of Pu. Lalrinchhana, MLA Pu. F. Lawmkima MLA Pu. H. Zathuama MLA and Pu. F. Malsawma, MLA (all from Mizoram). To usher in lasting peace and amicable settlement of all misunderstandings between the two confronting organisations, both sides agreed to shun down all forms of violence. It was also agreed that all improvised check gates of each party and checking all vehicles would be stopped immediately. All effort would be taken towards rehabilitation of the displaced persons and families. There would be no disturbances in the movement of all vehicles, carrying passengers and essential commodities. Keeping in mind the ‘principles of forgive and forget’, both sides agreed to respect all terms of agreement to ensure peace and tranquility in the District. Any misunderstanding
that might crop up from time to time would immediately be brought to the notice of the peace observers instead of taking unilateral decision on the matter.

The following persons were appointed as peace observers:

(1) Rev. Darsanglian Ruongel, Ex – Secretary I.C.I & Chairman Peace Committee – Convener

(2) Mr. Demmang Haokip, Vice President, Kuki Inpi,
Churachandpur – Member

(3) Mr. K. Vungjalian, Ex-Minister – Member

(4) Mr. Rosangzuala, General Secretary M.P.C. - Member

(5) Mr. Joseph Lalrothang, General Secretary, H.Y.A. – Member

(6) Mr. P.C. Lianchunga – Member

(7) Rev. Chawnghranga, Executive Secretary MPM. – Member

(7) Rev. Hrangzuala, Field Director LBM – Member

The function and responsibilities of the Peace Observers are:

(i) to observe violation of peace and communal harmony and to take appropriate actions and measures for peace and communal harmony
(ii) to conduct spot inquiry as and when complains regarding violations of peace and agreements are lodged

(iii) to initiate necessary arrangement for meeting of the two communities involved in the conflict

(iv) to convene meetings of the Peace Committee to resolve complains and report violation of peace and tranquility as often as required

(v) to take any other action related to maintenance of peace and tranquility

(vi) to have constant touch with the Goodwill Mission, in case any renewed tension and other forms of conflict arises between the two communities

People from all walks of life appreciated the 'Goodwill Mission' for its remarkable contribution. The Paite National Council, an apex social organisation of the Paite community, in its letter of appreciation, conveyed their profound gratitude and encouraged the team not to be disheartened by the residual sundries of the disaster. The letter reads as: "Having got the proof of your achievement through Xerox copy of the agreement/appeal of the KNF and ZRA, we know that
it is solely the result of your effort without any reserve with heart and soul of your
live-risk Goodwill Mission we will never forget the Zo descendant and the care
you have shown upon us. May God bless you and pay back for number of lives
that you have saved. The peace Committee Churachandpur tells us that, there
should be no action within three days, from the 04/07/97, and today your effort is
fruitful with the appeals. But, today on the 7/7/1997, at 11:00 am 2 houses of
Mualpi were burned down and at 12 noon 88 houses were burned down, and 4
were injured and 17 persons shot dead. Please see that our Peace Mission does not
fail for God’s sake”.

The Good Will Mission, before leaving for Mizoram, formed another peace
committee called Chaltonian Amo’s Peace Mission to pursue the same job of
holding out peace initiatives that had been taken up by them. This later mission
scored some success as the KNF and the ZRA soon signed Cease Fire Agreement
for three times in the presence of this peace committee. These agreements were,
however, often violated and the conflict continued because of lack of sincerity on
both sides.

Later, a meeting was convened on August 26, 1997 in the premises of Hmar
Nation Union, Churachandpur. The meeting was attended by the representatives
civil societies from each Kuki tribes, such as : Chongthu (UCTO), Gangte (GPL),
Haokip (HPC), Hmar (HNU, Kim (CCpur), Komrem (KU), Mizo (MPL), Paite
(PNC), Simte (SNL), Tedim Chin (TCU), Vaiphei (VNO) and Zou (UZO). K. Vungzalian and Chungsei Haokip were special invitees. The meeting was convened by Dr. Chaltonlien Amo, the then Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare who was also the President of Hmar National Union.

The meeting thoroughly discussed and reviewed the Cease–Fire Agreement signed between KNF and ZRA. The situations before and after the Cease–Fire Agreement, of August 11, 1997 between KNF and ZRA was reviewed categorically. It was found that some anti-social elements from both sides still working to discredit both the KNF and ZRA. However, the tense situation was brought down to a considerable extent.

On September 9, 1997 another round meeting of the peace mission was held at State Guest House, Imphal. Shri Rishang Keishing, the then Chief Minister of Manipur graced the meeting, and delivered a directive speech on the issue. About fifty three delegates from various tribal organizations, related Government Departments, and several NGOs were present in the meeting. The organisations present were : (1) United Chongthu Tribe Organisation (2) Hmar National Union, (3) Gangte Peoples' Council, (4) Kuki Inpi Manipur (5) Komrem Union (6) Mizo Peoples' Convention, (7) Paite National Council (8) Tedim Chin Union (9) Simte National Council, (10) Vaiphei National Organisation (11) United Zoumi

In his speech Rishang Keishing, expressed: “The security forces or outsiders cannot solve our problem and it is we, the leaders, present today, are the right and only persons who can solve the ongoing ethnic conflict and problems in Churachandpur. All of us should make concerted and determined effort to put the conflict between the Kuki and Paite an end once for all.” Holkhomang Haokip, the President of Kuki Inpi, Phungzathang Tonsing, President of the MPCC (I), V. Hangkhanlian, Minister, T.N. Haokip MLA and N. Songchinkhup, MLA also gave speeches stressing on the urgent need of restoring peace and tranquility in the strife-torn district of Churachandpur.

The said meeting of the Peace Mission attended by representatives of different 14 (fourteen) tribes expressed words of appreciation on the impact of the Cease-Fire between the KNF and ZRA. Further, the meeting resolved that the accredited top leaders of the KNF and ZRA be urged forthwith for extension of the Cease-Fire for another one month from the day both parties agreed to re-affirm the Cease-Fire. The meeting also approached the Chief Minister of Manipur to allow the Peace Mission to give suggestions on the matter relating to the security forces deployed in Churachandpur from time to time. They also asked the Chief Minister
to speed up the relief measures for the affected persons and families, especially on payment of ex-gratia to the deceased persons.

Then KIC and ZC held six rounds of meeting to resolve the differences of the conflicting parties. The ZC submitted 8 (eight) points as terms and conditions whereas the KIC submitted 5 (five) points for a Final Peace Accord. Most of the points put forward by both the parties had been answered and agreed upon after certain modifications and only a few points remained unresolved as they need wider consultation. As an outcome of the collective efforts of the individuals and various social organisations, the first MoU for realization of the Final Peace Accord was signed by Kuki Inpi, Churachandpur, on behalf of KNF and the Zomi Council, on behalf of ZRA on March 26, 1998. Contents of the MoU are the following points:

(1) that, all forms of violence including burning of houses, kidnapping, killing, extortion, fabrication of fake rumors and even using of harsh words against other communities shall be stopped forthwith.

(2) that, this agreement is valid for 28 days. Any extension of this agreement will be decided by 16th April, 1998 i.e. upto 23rd April, 1998 if required.

(3) that, during the operation of this MoU accord, the leaders of both the Kuki Inpi Churachandpur and Zomi Council will resolve the differences between
the two communities and sign a permanent peace accord. That a meeting shall be held every three days between the leaders of the Kuki Inpi and Zomi Council, in this regard.

(4) that, this shall be valid within all places of Manipur.

(5) that, a monitoring cell shall observe the functioning of this MoU. The monitoring cell shall also act as fact finding committee for recommendation to the law enforcing authority and to the leaders of both the communities, the required actions to be taken up for speedy return of peace among the conflicting groups. The recommendation of this monitoring cell shall be put into action either by the Government or the community concern.

(6) that, during the period, the leaders of Kuki Inpi, Churachandpur and Zomi Council shall jointly tour the different parts of the Churachandpur district and the State of Manipur and campaign for peace to convince the people, to accept a permanent peace settlement. That, the support of inter-Churches Committee, social workers, politicians and the Government shall be enlisted in such peace campaign.

(7) that, during this period, there shall be free movement of passengers in all parts of the district of Churachandpur. That gradually this shall be expanded to include free movement of individuals.
(8) that, the government shall be urged to establish security posts at vulnerable places within the town area so as to prevent any kind of untoward incident. That, the Government shall also be requested to provide escort services along the different roads of the district and also to place at the easy disposal, the District Administration and Rapid Action Forces, to respond to any untoward incident.

(9) that, the Ministers/ MLAs belonging to the district will be urged to camp at Churachandpur from time to time to help in the functioning of the monitoring cell and also to involve themselves in peace process.

(10) that, the government shall be urged to take up all steps for regular flow of essential commodities mean for relief and rehabilitation services to the effected persons. That, it shall also be urged to take up require measures as may be jointly recommended by the Kuki Inpi and Zomi Council, from time to time. That, the Kuki Inpi and Zomi Council shall extend all possible cooperation to the government agencies for successful implementation of relief and rehabilitation programmes.
4. 17 Response of Various Organisations

4. 17. 1 Peace Rally organized by the Meitei Society of Churachandpur

As a mark of registering their condemnation of the ethnic conflicts in Churachandpur, the Meitei Society, Churachandpur organized a peace rally on July 9, 1997. The rallyists assembled at Pudaite's Compound, near Salbung at 10:30 am. The procession started after a brief mass-mourning for the departed souls who lost their lives in the ethnic clash. The rally passed through Molnom, Khomawi, Tuibuang, Lamka, Police Point, New Bazar, Zion Street, Salem Veng, Hurvia Veng, New Lamka, Lanva Bridge, Punjab Camp, and Kawnpui and turned at Thingkangphai to move towards north on Teddim Road upto New Lamka, Dorcas Point. Then it followed the inter-village road between New Lamka and Bungmual on Dorcas Road upto Bungmual. Then it followed Tipaimukh road and moved upto public ground via, Phailen and Chiengkonpang. From there they entered public ground and held a meeting. Besides Meitei leaders, the meeting was addressed by leaders of neutral communities like Gangte, Hmar, Mizo, Simte, Vaiphei and Zou. Releasing of doves, representing each community marked the gathering a symbol of peace. The Meitei Society made sincere appeals to all communities engaged in hectic ethnic warfare to shunt violence and strive for return of peace in the District.
4.17. 2 Imphal EIMI Christian Peace Fellowship

The escalation of violence caused by the ethnic conflict in Churachandpur posed psychological impact on all the ethnic communities in other districts of Manipur. The Imphal based EIMI Christian Fellowship took the trouble of bringing all its communities together at peace prayer Fellowship. The first convention-cum-dedication of EIMI Christian Fellowship was held at Evangelical Christian Church (ECC), Tribal Colony on July 13, 1997. It was attended by a congregation of 2000 members drawn from different churches of various denominations belonging to EIMI Community, based at Imphal. Singing of special numbers by the churches choir along with short addresses by various church leaders are the highlights of the convention. Representing their respective churches the ordained Ministers attired themselves in their ceremonial gowns which marks the uniqueness of the gathering. The Convention witnessed powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, who anointed the congregation with the spirit of forgiveness. Thus, the members exchanged loving words and shook hands each other. In the wake of the unfortunate happenings in Churachandpur District, the Convention expressed its deep anguish and condemned the escalating violence. Therefore, it pledged to desist from anything in words or in deed that could excite misunderstandings among the cognate groups. The Convention closed with a
message of forgiveness and mass prayer for restoring peace in Churachandpur District.

4. 17. 3 Inter-Church Peace Committee.

Following the signing of the first Memorandum of Understanding by the Kuki Inpi, Churachandpur and the Zomi Council on the March 26, 1998, many attempts were made for bringing normalcy in the strife-torn district of Churachandpur. The Inter-Churches Peace Committee was formed and began to chalk out steps to materialize the MoU. The Committee encouraged all sections of the communities to uphold the peace process at any cost and offer earnest prayers for early settlement of the problem. With a view to expedite peaceful co-existence the Inter-Churches Peace Committee sent 7 (seven) pastors to the far flung areas of the district. They proclaimed the message of peace and reconciliation to the affected people. They carried along with them a letter of appeal telling: “We are brothers and sisters in Christ and racially the same stock of people.” Pastors in the team comprised of: (1) Rev. Khaigin Gangte (ESC), (2) Rev. S. Thanglian (EBC), (3) Rev. Letngam (ECA), (4) Rev. H. Paokhokai (EOC), (5) Rev. Thianzalal (IOC), (6) Rev. Rokhumvel (ICI), (7) Rev. Chinsuankham (EBC). On April 14, 1998, the mission began and ended on April 17, 1998. They visited places like Churachandpur, Singhat, Mualnuam, Thanlon, Henglep and Tuilaphai. Prior to the
mission's tour, a peace rally of all Pastors was organized on April 4, 1998 in Churachandpur.

4. 17. 4 Government Initiatives

The State High Level Committee, headed by W. Nipamacha Singh, Chief Minister of Manipur, took over the charge of monitoring peace process from the "DR. CHARTON'S PEACE MISSION" and initiated final round of peace accord between the Kuki and the Zomi. As instructed by the State Government and authorization from the conflicting parties, the Kuki Inpi and the Zomi Council, after every exerted effort, on behalf of their representing parties, pledged to forgive and forget the past mistakes. The Kuki Inpi and the Zomi Council appreciated the bold steps of the State Government and its official commitment towards peace and reconstructive programmes.

4. 18 Compromise

As a mark of customary apology for mowing down 10 (ten) innocent persons and injuring 4 (four) others on the fateful night of June 24, 1997 at Saikul Village by the KNF and subsequent dragging of the two communities into conflict situations, the Kuki Inpi offered a feast by killing a four legged animal, a bull (Bongchal) on September 29, 1998. Under a cordial atmosphere and mutual trust, the Kuki Inpi and the Zomi Council partook the feast together. The Zomi Council reciprocated
the good gesture of Kuki Inpi by offering another feast by killing a pig (Vohchal) on the following day (the 30th September, 1998). This event marked the restoration of peace among the conflicting parties.

4. 19 Final Peace Accord

The following points of agreement were laid down and signed in presence of the Government of Manipur on October 1, 1998 as Final Peace Accord.

1. that, the nomenclature Kuki and Zomi shall be respected mutually by all Kukis and Zomis. Every individual or group of persons shall be at liberty to call himself or themselves by any name, and the nomenclature Kuki and Zomi shall not in any way be imposed upon any person or group against his/their will at any point of time.

2. that, any person who occupied or confiscated any land, private building, houses and quarters illegally during the period of clashes shall return the same to the rightful owners.

3. that, no Kuki or Zomi militants shall indulge themselves in any forcible collection of funds, taxes, etc. from across the community. This will strictly apply to individuals, Government employees, business establishments and contractors.
4. that, all the charters of MoU between the Kuki Inpi and the Zomi Council shall be operative and binding to all concerned parties including the Government of Manipur.

4.19.1 Signatories:


4.19.2 Witness:

W. Nipamacha Singh, Chief Minister of Manipur (2) Dr. L. Chandramani Singh, Deputy Chief Minister of Manipur (3) Kim Gangte, MP, Outer Manipur (4) V.