CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION
In order to understand man’s place in nature, the physical anthropologists have attempted to demonstrate human evolution on the phenotype description and phylogenetic classification on the basis of palaeontological findings. In view of its growth and new orientation, physical anthropology continues to be a study of human evolution and biological variation. Physical anthropology, thus, may be viewed as an approach to human biology in its widest context with an emphasis on human populations. Since consideration of a cultural context is always basic to a proper appreciation and understanding of the problems of human evolution, physical anthropology is also concerned with the interaction of socio-cultural and other environmental factors. Therefore, physical anthropologists are directly concerned with different facets of demography. The impact of infant and child mortality on fertility has been closely examined by demographers because of the net effect of mortality and fertility on the rate of population growth (Bongaarts et al, 2001; Lehrar, 1984; Preston, 1978).

Demographers have for a long time been interested in the study of fertility and mortality which is one of the components of population change. Infant and child mortality are among the best indicators of socio-economic development because a society’s life expectancy at birth is determined by the survival chances of infants and children. It is, however, unfortunate that people in the past studied animal, bird populations, events leading to wars, peace, marriages among the elite society, etc., but, fail to pay due attention to the important aspects of human life, which so vitally influenced and effected both administrators and planners (Raj, 2010).
Fertility is the reproductive performance of an individual or population, measured as the number of viable offspring produced over a period and it is generally expressed as the number of live births per year per thousand of the population (Jones et al, 1995). According to Thomson and Lewis (Raza and Nangia, 1984), fertility is generally used to indicate the actual reproductive performance of a woman or group of women. Child mortality rate, on the other hand is the number of deaths of children aged 1 to 4 years per 1000 children in the same age group in a given year (Raza and Nangia, 1984). NFHS-3 (IIPS, 2007) defined child mortality as the probability of dying between the first and fifth birthdays. According to WHO (2008), child mortality rate is the probability of a child born in a specific year or period dying before reaching the age of five, if subject to age-specific mortality rates of that period.

In every society, it is essential to find out birth and death rates and the factors which influence these. In fact, birth or death of a child in a family effects and influences the whole family structure on the one hand and the society as a whole on the other. It also effects the health of the parents and also their psychology and attitude towards family life. It is of course always true that the impact is always more on parents than on the society, where entrance and exit is always continuous. In today’s scenario, population problems and fertility rate is being studied by the policy makers, both in the government and outside. There is no aspect of human life which is not influenced by fertility and mortality.
The 20th century witnessed dramatic declines in mortality in almost all countries of the world, regardless of initial levels, socio-economic circumstances and development strategies. In the advance economies, the declines were already apparent at the end of the 19th century (Stolnitz, 1965). Now, infant and child mortality enjoy a privileged position among the issues of demography. They lie at the heart of key debates of theoretical interest, and are illuminated by the wide variety of disciplines that have helped explain demographic phenomena. The child mortality rate is an indicator of the social situation in a country. It reflects the adverse environmental health hazards including economic, educational and cultural.

The anthropologists are generally interested in human populations at micro-level. However, it is proved beyond doubt that there are marked variations in mortality patterns and rates between various countries and between various populations, even within one country. Recent researches on mortality have shown that fertility and mortality rates are influenced by various types of biosocial phenomenon. But if one scans through the anthropological literature carefully, one can find that only few detailed researches has so far been carried out at micro-level on Indian populations, particularly among the tribal populations of Northeast India regarding fertility and child mortality and the effects of various bio-social determinants.

This thesis mainly focuses on the fertility and child mortality among the Khongsai Kukis of Saikul sub-division and Imphal town of Manipur. For the present study, we have selected Saikul sub-division in Senapati district to represent the rural population and
Imphal town to represent the urban population. According to Census of India (2001), Senapati district stands lowest in terms of literacy rate among all districts in Manipur. Besides, Saikul sub-division is one of the remotest areas in Senapati district of Manipur where most of the villages are without health centres or sub-centres and schools with poor transport and communication facilities. Considering these factors, we have selected Saikul sub-division for the present study. We shall find out how various bio-social factors such as age at menarche, maternal age, age at marriage, age at first live birth, type of marriage, type of family, education, economic conditions, son preference, health condition and adoption of family planning are influencing the fertility and child mortality on the study population. We shall also find out how differently these factors are influencing the fertility and child mortality in Saikul sub-division and Imphal town.

With this end in view, we propose to undertake the study on bio-social determinants of fertility and child mortality among the Khongsai Kukis of Saikul sub-division and Imphal town in Manipur, with the idea that those living in the town have been taking much more care for their children than those living in the villages. The objectives of the present study are as follows:

1) To study the demographic structure of the Khongsai Kukis of Saikul sub-division and Imphal town.

2) To find out the status of fertility and child mortality in the study population.

3) To find out the biosocial determinants responsible for fertility and child mortality in the study population.
The Land

Manipur, one of the Northeastern states of India is a fertile field to study Anthropology for its colourful Naga, Kuki and Mizo Hills-tribes; and the Meiteis, Bishnupriya Manipuris, Brahmins, Pangal Muslims, etc. of Plain-castes people (Das, 1993 and Sen, 1992). Physically, the state may be divided into two distinct regions- Plain Central Valley and the surrounding Hill areas. About 10 percent of the land is flat plain. The Plain Central Valley is almost oval in shape, covering an area of 1,920 sq.km. situated at about 750 meters above sea level. Manipur has a total area of 22,327 sq.km. out of which 20,089 sq.km. are covered by hills. The state lies between latitudes 23° 80' to 25° 68' N and longitudes 93° 03' to 94° 78' E. According to census of India (2001), Manipur has a total population of 22,93,896 persons, of which 11,61,952 are males and 11,31,944 are females and a total literacy rate of 70.5 percent. The state has 9 (nine) districts, namely Bishnupur, Chandel, Churachandpur, Imphal East, Imphal West, Senapati, Tamenglong, Thoubal and Ukhrul.

Imphal town is the capital of Manipur state having a total area of 1228 sq.km. and a total population of 7,11,261 persons (Statistical Abstract Manipur, 2008). Imphal has a literacy rate of 79.7 percent (Census of India, 2001). Majority of the people in Imphal town belong to the Meitei community, who are also known as the plain people. Saikul, on the other hand, is a hilly sub-division of Senapati district (earlier known as Manipur North) in Manipur. The district lies between latitudes 24° 30' and 25° 45' N, longitudes 93° 30' and 94° 30' E and altitude of 1,061.5 feet above sea level. Saikul sub-division has
a total population of 51,438 persons (Statistical Abstract Manipur, 2008) and a literacy rate of 51.4 percent (Census of India, 2001) which is comparatively lower than the Imphal town and the overall Manipur.

The People

Khongsai is one among the various sub-tribes of the Kuki who inhabit mainly in the hilly areas of the Northeastern states in India. Majority of them live in the state of Manipur. They are also found in the states of Assam and Nagaland. It may be noted that the various Kuki groups have in common, regarding their culture, tradition, language, food habits, beliefs, etc.

Racially, the Kukis belong to Mongoloid, whose dialects however can be referred to as Kuki-Chin, which is an off-shoot of the Tibeto-Burman group of language (Ansari, 1986). Regarding religion, they practice Christianity. The Kukis are patrilineal who practice monogamy. The eldest son of the family inherits the parent's property and is also responsible for his parents and siblings. Their staple food is rice.

A Kuki village in general, is administered by the Chief called 'Haosa' who is the all-powerful lord of the village. 'Haosa' has the absolute right of ownership over the entire land of the village which he distributes to the villagers for cultivation and for other purposes. In the annual assembly usually held at the residence of ‘Haosa’, he along with his ‘Semang’ (cabinet) and ‘Pachong’ (auxiliary of the assembly), and all the house-hold
heads of the village congregate to discuss and resolve matters relating to the village and the community.

Misao (1995) and Sen (1992) reported that the Kukis are physically short, strong and sturdy with a goodly development of muscles. In general, their legs are short in comparison with the length of their bodies, and arms long. The face is nearly as broad as it is long and is generally round or square, cheekbones are high, broad and prominent eyes, small and almond shaped nose which are short and flat with nostrils. The women appear squatter than the man even, but are strong and lusty. The colour of the skin varies between dark yellow-brown, dark olive, copper coloured and yellow olive. Beards and whiskers are almost unknown. The hair is worn by both sexes, in a knot over the nape of the neck, and completely parted in the middle. Similarly, Brown (2001) in his book, “The Statistical Account of Manipur” stated that the legs and arms of the Khongjai (Kuki) are occasionally very muscular, and they are capable of carrying heavy weights. But, he also concluded that the features of the Khongjai are various, and one standard cannot be laid down for all; the stature also varies, and tall men alternate with short; but the middle height is that most frequently met with.

Dress and ornaments

The traditional dress of the Kuki male consists of boitong sangkhol (a half-sleeve jacket) and a pheichawn (short lungi or dhoti). The women traditionally wore their hair in two plaits braided around the head; they wore a nih san (red slip) underneath a ponve (a wrap around) which was worn from above the chest. The ornaments included bilba (earrings),
hah-le-chao (bracelets and bangles), khi (necklace), and occasionally bilkam (a type of ring-shaped earring worn to stretch the earlobes).

**Marriage**

Marriage is universally regarded as natural and necessary. As a social institution marriage is a union regulated by custom or law. This is bound to be so as society is anxious for the preservation and proper upkeep of the race.

Monogamy is the ideal rule among the Kuki though a second wife is usually taken after the dead of the first wife or divorced with her. Marriage between a boy and his father’s brother’s daughter is highly restricted though marriage with mother’s brother’s daughter i.e., neimu is still preferred by some but many are now against such type of marriage especially the younger generation and educated persons. One simple reason of marriage with neimu is that one of the sons must marry mother’s brother’s daughter in order to perpetuate the ties of bride taking and bride giving. A mother prefers to bring a daughter-in-law from her family or clan with a view to increasing cordial relationship with that family or clan.

However, marriage with father’s sister’s daughter called tunu is strictly prohibited. If this is done, the reciprocal relationship gets disturbed. In other words, any girl from father’s side is regarded as taboo. They belong to a man’s exogamous groups. Parallel cousin marriages are also disfavoured. It is believed that, if a man marries his mother’s sister’s daughter ill-health and bad luck and deaths follows (Doungel, 1992).
Forms

Though there are instances of love marriage, arrange marriage is the common practice of the Kukis till the last few decades where the parents of the boy and the girl take the initiative. But, love marriage is more common than arrange marriage in the present day though the later is much preferred by most of the parents. Marriage by negotiation is generally initiated by the boy's side. The parents of the boy first of all approach the parents of the 'neinu' or bride. Or the son who had fallen in love with any other girl and has made up to marry her may give an indication of his desire to his parents. Then the parents of the boy together with their tuchas (wife-taking relations) and bechas (best friends) will take jubel with them and approach the parents of the girls and over the jubel, negotiation commence. If the parents of the girls do not approve the proposal, they will give them a jubel in return as a mark of disapproval to the proposed marriage. If the proposal is acceptable to the girls' parents, the boy's parents along with their men will go again for the second time to finalize the negotiation. At this time the parents of the girl will kill a pig and the representatives of the boy and the girls' people consisting of tuchas, bechas and the village Chief or Haosa will eat it.

Bride price

The question of the amount of bride price among the Kuki is not definite. In the olden days when cash was unknown to the Kukis, bride price was paid in the form of mithuns (*Bos frontalis*) and gongs. The number of mithuns paid in marriage varies among the tribes. Normally a selnu (female mithun) is paid as a part of the first installment of the
bride price, the balance is usually paid in due course. If the girl’s parents or next-of-kin agrees, any article of small value such as bead, necklace to represent one or more mithuns or gongs. But in the present days, with the scarcity or difficulty in finding, they are sometimes being substituted by any kind according to the agreement between the parties (Doungel, 1992).

**Activities during childbirth**

In Kuki, the term childbirth is called *nau-pen* (*nau* means child and *pen* means birth). As the time of delivery approaches, the women and the village priest are called in. The children and adults of the family except the mother and father are asked to go out of the house. It is the job of the elderly women to give help to the mother during delivery of the baby. The bed for the mother and new born child is made inside the house on the platform floor after delivery.

After cutting the *nau-lai* (navel-cord), an old woman washes the baby with warm water, placing the baby on her legs and strokes the baby gently with her hands. The *nau-lai* is cut with a bamboo blade which is made by sharpening the edge of a piece of bamboo wattle. Sometimes the navel string is buried in the ground below the platform floor of the house just beneath the spot where water pitchers are kept. Right after birth, an old woman closely examines the body of the baby to find out whether every part is normal and without any deformity. She also announces whether the baby is a boy or a girl. One amusing thing is the custom of repeatedly enthusing the mother to make an effort during the process of delivery to give birth to a male child (Goswami, 1985).
Nau min sah dan (method of naming a baby)

The Kukis add the end part of the paternal grandfather’s name to the first part of the eldest son. If the grandfather’s name is Seilet, the name of the eldest son will begin with ‘Let’, for eg., Letkhomang. Similarly, the last part of the maternal grandfather’s name is given to the second son. The same is done to the first and second daughters whom a part of the paternal and maternal grandmother’s name is added to their names. The eldest daughter takes a part of her paternal grandmother’s name and the second daughter takes a part of her maternal grandmother’s name. The other children are named after any of other relatives and friends according to their choice.

It is essential to give a name to the newborn baby immediately. It may be a temporary name or a permanent one, but naming of the baby whether a boy or a girl soon after birth is obligatory. This is because of the traditional belief that if a name is not given to the newborn, evil spirits may do harm to the baby (Goswami, 1985).

Naudop-ju leh naudop-an

Naudop-ju is the name of the wine prepared for the birthday celebration and is taken by all who participate in the ceremony. But, this type of ceremony is not practice in the present days. Naudop-an is the food prepared for the same occasion and is served only to the old men and women especially who attended the delivery. During the time when naudop-ju was performed, the old men and women eat rice and meat and also drink the offered wine. But, the others only drink wine. The wine is offered in an earthen pitcher
with a wine-sipping pipe of bamboo placed inside the pitcher. The priest will remain present in the ceremony and also partakes of the food and wine (Goswami, 1985).

**Disposal of death**

The Kukis bury their dead. But their customs and methods vary in accordance to the nature of the death. The nature of death may be classified into two broad categories, such as: (i) *Thipha/ In Thi* (i.e., natural death or death due to sickness and old ages) and (ii) *Thise/ Gam Thi* (i.e., unnatural death which includes death caused by accident of any kind, suicide, murder and incurable diseases). But, due their conversion into Christianity, there is hardly any such differentiation between the two. After performing all the necessary rites, the priest (Pastor) prays to *Pathen* (God) for granting direct route for the soul to the *Mithikho* (village of the death) or *Vangam* (heaven). The corpse is then, put on a bier and is carried out for burial which is detained for a moment near the grave for the people to bid their last farewell by throwing a piece of stone or earth to the grave. Finally, the body is lowered into the grave. The Priest sings *Lhan-Khuh La* (i.e., funeral song) and performs a rite to prevent the spirits/souls of the living people being entombed. Following that, the grave is fully filled up with earth (Doungel, 1992).

**Kosa**

It is a funeral feast provided by the next-of-kin of the deceased in expression of grief and love. Except the prescribed portions of the meat for distribution, the rest is cooked for all the people who attended the funeral. Just before partaking the feast the *Lhalho* rite and *Sakau Lhai* rite is performed by the village *Thempu*. The Kukis also practice a custom of
presenting shawl called *Pondum* to the dead person by covering the coffin with it. The eldest daughter and the son(s)-in-law are obliged by the above mentioned custom, and on their failure a fine of *mithun* is claimable from them by the next-of-kin man of the dead person. This custom is known as *Tomse/Tom man* (Doungel, 1992).

**Economy**

Like most of the tribal people in North East India, the Khongsai Kuki, for their livelihood, mostly depend on land and forest resources, excepting to those who are living in Imphal town and working in government or private offices. Wet rice cultivation is practiced in the hills with wooden plough yoked to a pair of bullock or to a single buffalo. Although, agriculture depends mainly on rain water, irrigation of rain water is, however, very poor. Ploughing work usually starts in the months of May and June. There are two methods in which moistened seeds grow to their full stature without transplanting the seedling. The other method is by transplanting the seedling. For the first method, they first moisten their seeds with water and keep in a covered basket till it shoots. Thereafter, they cast these seeds. For second method, the seeds are sown in a prepared small plot of land. After few days, they carefully and gently pull up the seedling with roots by hand and then transplant them by hand in the wet field where these grow to their full stature.

Shifting (jhum) cultivation is the most common forms of economy in the hill areas. They select a virgin or near virgin forest land, cut down the trees and burn them. The burnt ashes serve as fertilizer. Thereafter, they grow their crops. After a year or so, they leave that jhum site for a considerable period so as to allow growing new jungle on
them. They select another forest land and repeat the same process. As this process is not much gainful for future, the government is trying to bring more and more areas under permanent terrace cultivation. Shifting cultivation known as jhuming is also the predominant form of agriculture among the hill tribes of North East India.

They grow food grains, pulses, vegetables, root crops, etc. to meet their need of food and cloth. Their economy continues to be subsistence oriented than market oriented. Women play a large part in building up the economy of the family. They are engaged in planting and weeding the fields, harvesting the crops and household duties, the women also work at the looms. Like the other tribal women, the Khongsai Kuki women are expert in weaving. To provide clothing to the family members is the responsibility of the housewife. Men are equally expert in handicraft. Bamboo and cane works, basket making, mat making and woodwork art are the work of men.

**Flora**

Blessed with an amazing variety of flora and fauna, 67% of the geographical area of Manipur is hill tract covered by forests. *Siroi Lily* which is one of the most popular flora in Manipur is the only terrestrial lily grown on the hill tops of Siroi hill in Ukhrul district. Rhododendron, cotton, cane, bamboo, cactus, wild flowering plant, famous orchids, lotus, water lilies, etc grow here. Rice, cotton maize, wheat, millet, mustard, potato, sesame, black gram, etc. are grown in the plains. Pineapple, jack fruit, sugarcane, mango, orange, banana, plantains, peas, apples, guava, chillies, cabbage, pumpkin, sweat potato, potato,
betel leaves, are also grown in abundance. Tobacco is also cultivated as common garden crop.

**Fauna**

The Hoolock gibbon, the Slow loris, the Clauded leopard, the Spotted linshang, Mrs. Hume's Barbacked Pheasant, Blyths Tragopan, Burmese Pea-Fowl, four different species of Hornbills etc. form only a part of the rich natural fauna of Manipur. However, the most unique is the Sangai, the dancing deer. Other mentionable fauna is Salamander known as Lengwa found at the foothill of Siroi in Ukhrul. *Mithun (Bos frontalis)* which is semi-domesticated animal is found in the north western part of the State. Besides, barking deer, spotted deer, sambar, goral (*Manipuri Sabeng*), monkey, jackal, wild pig, wild dog, wild cat, rat, snake, lizard, toad, vulture, eagle, jungle cow, bulbul, maina, wild goose, duck, etc. are also found here.