The present work is a humble individual effort to give an academic focus on the Thadou-Kuki tribal society in Manipur. Ever since I started my service career in a Thadou-Kuki area of Manipur, I started to develop a keen interest in their social and political issues. It is a fact that serious academic interest in the North-East Indian tribes is only a recent phenomenon. And even now many of the tribal societies remain outside the notice of the scholars and the students and are often subject to hasty and unempirical generalisations which, on proper and meticulous observations unveil a remarkable difference.

The present study has been initiated with a limited objective. I have tried to give an idea of the traditional authority structure of the Thadou-Kuki tribal society, its various bases and types. I have also tried to show the impact of inter tribal feuds and migration in shaping their powerful authority structure. The sinister impact of British administration on the tribal structure leaves a perennial academic task to reassess the contemporary tribal situation vis-a-vis the alien rule. The organised mass movement against the British was a natural reaction to alien rule. I have tried to explain the implication of this in the work. A study of legitimacy add
relevance of this traditional structure in the present context of our country becomes an imperative and hence one is to look into the adaptive capability of the traditional system with the challenges of transition. In many tribal societies, with such challenges, the old systems have lost grounds. A propensity of 'disagreement and conflict' with the traditional system has in such cases brought about a change in the olden authority structure and has adopted to democratis norms. But in the Thadoukuki society the trend is different. The purely subjective attitude of the local mass and absence of any opposition from within the society could not only not bring about any structural mobility in the traditional system but also left the latter to struggle for the restoration of status quo. The challenges of transition and those of modernisation have been faced by the traditional structure and have been gradually responded by itself without giving room for any alternative sociopolitical group, in a unique manner. A new elite class was nurtured by the traditional authority structure, which was meant for advocating the cause of the traditional authority on the one hand and for finding an alternative channel, at this hour, for establishing itself in the emerging political scene on the other. It is a great quest for a new legitimacy of the
traditional structure in the new set up. The purely anthropological and pristine factors have helped to build up an image of this elite class. In this circumstance a sociopolitical study seems to have more relevance than a purely conjectural anthropological study of the tribe in question.

The term Thadou-Kuki is likely to create some confusion because all the Thadous are Kukis but not the vice versa. Kuki is a broad term like Naga, under which many other tribes are covered. Any way in this work the use of the term 'Kuki' will mainly emphasise the Thadou-Kukis.

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