

**THE PHONOLOGY OF THADOU:
A TYPOLOGICAL AND GENERATIVE STUDY**

**A thesis submitted to the Department of Linguistics,
North Eastern Hill University, Shillong for fulfilment of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics
under the guidance and supervision of**

Prof. Juanita War



by
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(Regd. No. 841 of 10.05.2004)

**DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
NORTH EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
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2007**

DECLARATION

JANUARY 2007

I, Pauthang Haokip, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me and that the content of this thesis did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me, or to the best of my knowledge, to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university.

This thesis is being submitted to North Eastern Hill University for the degree of doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics.

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I was told
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My occasion
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My sincere
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My thanks to
Indian Language
Agency of

My thanks to
Linguistics, Dr
Nirmal Jha
Bass

To those who
to go beyond
A.K. Mishra, I

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everyone at
my school

To

My beloved father

who taught me to pursue knowledge

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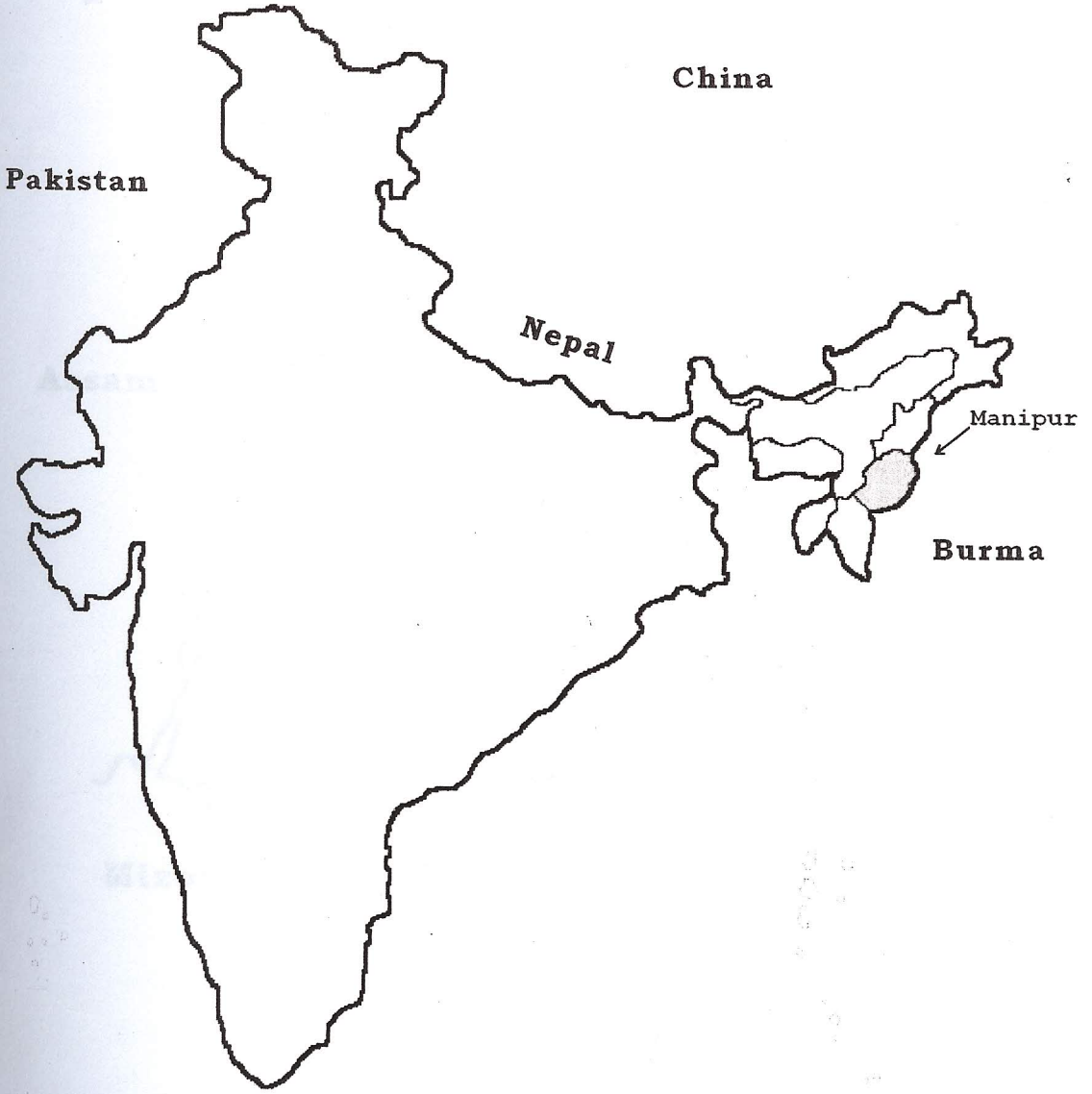
I want to share the pleasure of accomplishment to my parents who were the real pillars of my education throughout.

Last but not the least, I want to thank all the unnamed individuals who have been of any help in this accomplishment. Thank you all.

(Pauthang Haokip)

NORTH

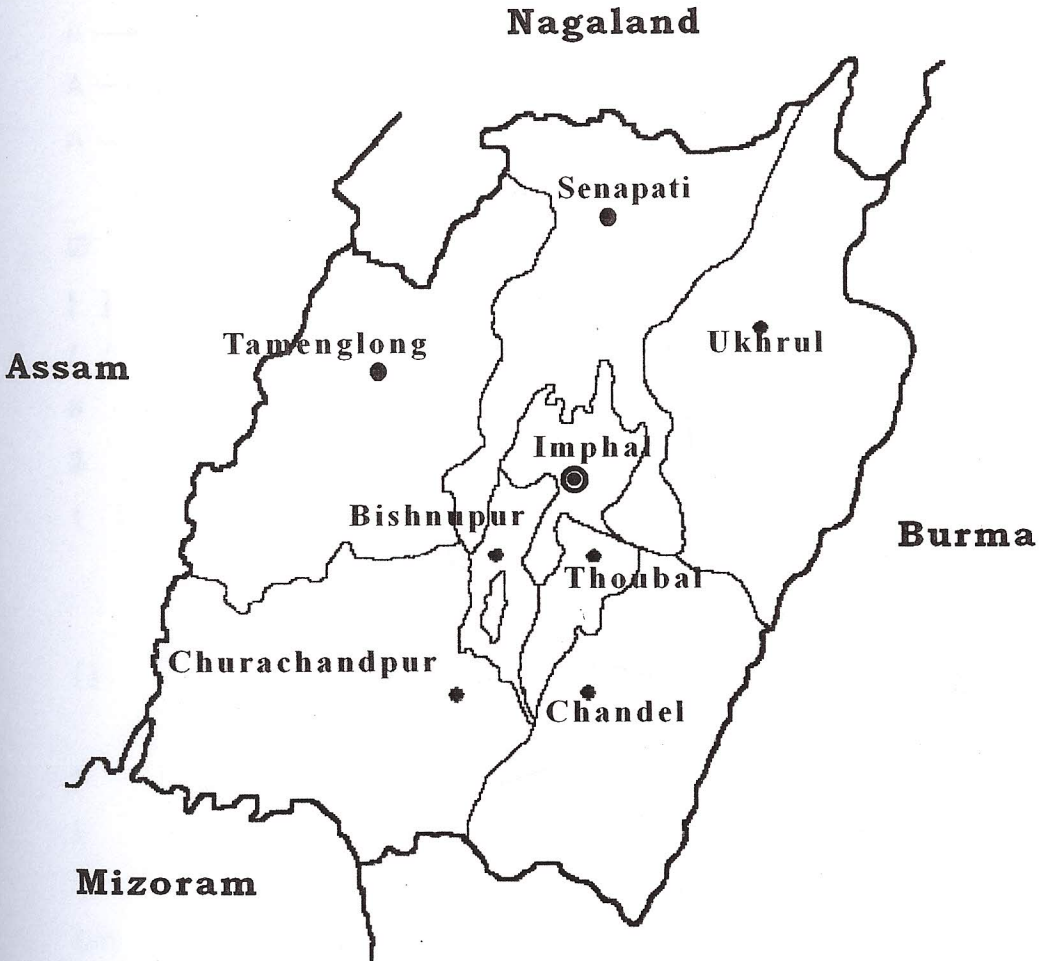
Map of India



MAP NO.1

MAP OF MANIPUR

NORTH



MAP.2

LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

→	=	'rewrite as': 'is actualised as'
/	=	'slash': 'in the environment'
—	=	'dash': 'where it occurs'
A → B	=	'A is rewritten as B'
A → B/C	=	'A is rewritten as B after C'
A → B/X—Y	=	'A is rewritten as B where A appears in the context X----- Y'
∅	=	'zero'
[]	=	'Enclosed phonetic transcription'
/ /	=	'Enclose phonemic transcription'
#	=	word boundary
\$	=	syllable boundary
()	=	'parentheses': 'enclose two partially identical rules in which one element is optional'
{ }	=	'Brace': 'enclose two partially identical rules into a single rule'
/	=	high tone
\	=	low tone
+	=	'plus, combine with'
Lat	=	Lateral
Vcd	=	Voiced
Dist	=	Distributed
Ant	=	Anterior
Coro	=	Coronal
Cont	=	Continuant
Son	=	Sonorant
Rd	=	Round
Syll	=	Syllable
Adj. /adj	=	Adjective

Adv. / adv	=	Adverb
Del	=	delayed
Asp.	=	Aspirated
Cons	=	Consonant
TB	=	Tibeto-Burman
UAS	=	Unaspirated
UR	=	Unrounded
Vd.	=	Voiced
VI.	=	Voiceless
p ⁷	=	unreleased stop
p ^{h>}	=	stronger/energetic aspirated stop
p ^{h<}	=	weaker aspirated stop
t ^{h>}	=	stronger/energetic aspirated stop
t ^{h<}	=	weaker aspirated stop
b ^{>}	=	stop with stronger plosion
b ^{<}	=	stop with weaker plosion
d ^{>}	=	stop with stronger plosion
d ^{<}	=	stop with weaker plosion
k [~]	=	post velar
g ^{>}	=	stop with stronger plosion
g ^{<}	=	stop with weaker plosion
m ⁷	=	unreleased nasal
n ⁷	=	unreleased nasal
ŋ ⁷	=	unreleased nasal
v	=	It is a partially devoiced labio-dental fricative
z	=	is a partially devoiced fricative

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Name and Identity of the People:

Thadou is one of the Kuki tribes. The term Kuki is a generic name like the Nagas, and refers to both linguistic group and ethno-cultural entity. In Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and other parts of the North Eastern States of India they are known as Kukis. So both Thadou and Kuki will be used interchangeably to refer to both the ethnic group and the language. Moreover, Thadou cannot be studied in isolation because the term has not been widely accepted among the speakers and in most of the writings Kuki is used to refer to them. The term Kuki first appeared in Rawlins (1787:187) as "Cuci's, or Mountaineers of Tipra".

McCulloch (1857:56-57) said that inhabitants of the hills surrounding the valley of Manipur are known in the west. "... under the general appellations of Nagas and Kukis, that in Manipur, the Manipuris use the term 'HAU', to embrace them all, and that the term 'Khongjai' is used to denote the KUKIS".

Shakespeare, (1912) said, "the term 'KUKI', like Naga, Chin, Shendu and many others, ... has come to have a fairly definite meaning, and we now understand by it certain closely allied clans with well marked characteristics, belonging to the Tibeto-Burman stock. On the Chittagong border the term is loosely applied to most of the inhabitants of the interior hills beyond the Chittagong Hill Tracks. In Cachar it generally means some family of the

Thadou or Khawtlang clan, locally distinguished as New and Old Kukis. In the Lushai Hills, nowadays the term is hardly ever employed, having been superseded by Lushai. In the Chin Hills and generally on the Burma border all these clans are called "Chin". Soppit (1893) indicates the migration of the Kuki into Manipur State, Naga Hills, and the North Cachar Hills of India.

The name was perpetuated by British administrators such as Shakespeare who noted that the term was not recognized by the people themselves **Shakespeare (op.cit)** but still used as a cover term for all these people "who have so much in common, both in language, manners, customs, and system of internal government" (Soppit 1893: iv).

An Indian linguist, Shree Krishan (1980:2) argued that the term Kuki "has its origin in their own (i.e. Thado) language". Shree Krishan traced the word as the combination of two syllables: *ku* from xul 'hole' and *ki* from kit 'again' or 'afterward'. Therefore, Kuki means the people coming again from the hole, the story that these clans shared regarding their origin (Shree Krishan 1980:3). However, Rawlins (1787) believe that the term means "mountaineers" therefore "high landers." Until we can trace the origin of the word to counter-check Bareigts' source, i.e., the meaning of Kuki in the dialects of Bengali and Assamese, the meaning of the term cannot be arrived at.

Lieut. R. Stewart, described the Thadou as; "The people to whom the term Kookie is given by the inhabitants of the Eastern Frontier of Bengal, occupy,

together with other tribes, the hilly tracts lying to the North, South and East of Cachar, and Manipoor: they are divided into numerous clans each under a petty hereditary chief or Rajah."

It must be noted that the appellation of the Kookie is unknown among them, and they have no title embracing their whole race, but they call one another by the names of different clans, which speak the same language, with very slight modification in the dialects, in Manipur the language is called among them as Thadou Pao, from the one of their principal clans, whereas in Nagaland, Assam and other parts of the North-Eastern States of India it is called Kuki Pao.

Kuki is probably an Assamese or Bengali term, applied to various hill tribes, such as the Lusheis, Rangkhols, Thadous, etc. It seemed to have been known at a comparatively early period. In the Raj Mala, Siva is stated to have fallen in love with a Kuki woman, and the Kukis are mentioned in connection with the Tipperah Raja Chachag, who flourished about 1512. . According to a legend the hill people of Manipur; the Nagas, the Kuki-Chin groups and the Manipuris are the descendents from a common ancestor who had three sons. The Nagas are the descended from the eldest son; the Kuki-Chin groups are the second son and the Manipuris from the youngest son. This suggests that the three groups were probably from the same origin. However, this cannot be proved.

The Naga belongs to the northern parts of Manipur, the Kuki-Chin to the southern parts and the Manipuris to the middle area of the valley. The Kuki-Chin groups are migratory by nature whereas the Nagas and the Manipuris are static. The Kuki-Chin group arrived in Manipur between 1830 to 1850. Thadou or Thadou-Kuki as it is presently known is a fairly large tribe among the non-Nagas tribes of Manipur. In Manipur they all speak Thadou language, and use the Roman script as their writing system. They are conversant with the regional language Meitei too.

1.2 Geographical Location:

The Kukis were known as great warriors and kept on moving from place to place after conquering the land of other groups. Kukis are scattered in different geographical regions of North East India. They live in the hilly country bounded by the Angami Nagas of Naga Hills district in the north, the province of Myanmar in the East, the Chin Hills and the Lushai Hills in the south and district of Cachar (Assam) in the west. In Assam they live in North Cachar Hills and Karbi-Anglong districts. They are also found in different parts of Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, Bangladesh and upper Chindwin districts of Myanmar. However, majority of them live in the state of Manipur.

1.3 Population:

According to the Census of Manipur 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 & 2001 the total number of Thadou speakers is as follows:

Year	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Thadou	47,998	59,955	56,466	103,667	115,045

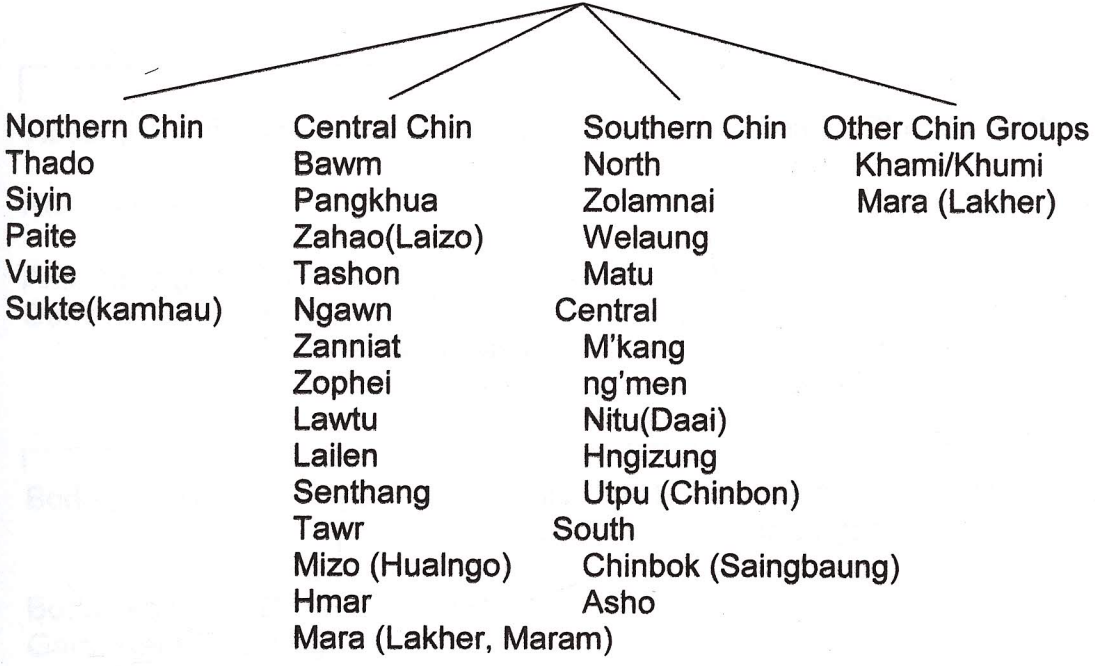
Table 1:

But "Languages of India", 1991 Census has given as 107,992.

1.4 Position of Thadou in the Tibeto-Burman Language Family:

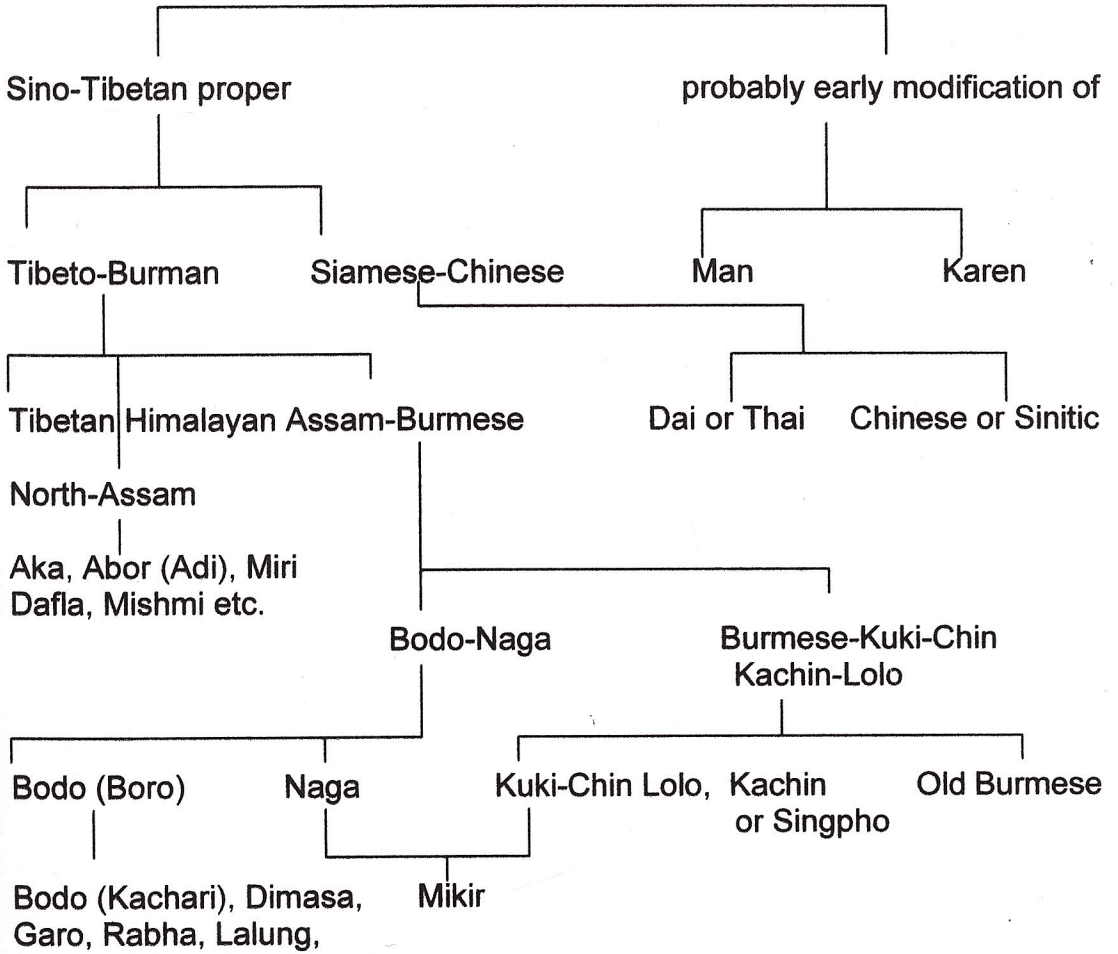
The Sino-Tibetan family consists of two branches: Sinitic, consisting of the Chinese languages and possibly the aberrant Bai or Minjia language of Yunnan, and Tibeto-Burman, which includes several hundred languages spoken from the Tibetan plateau in the north to Malay peninsula in the east. The Tibeto-Burman is one of the important branches of Indo-Chinese family of languages, which genealogically falls under the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese family of languages (Grierson, 1903). But the classification of Tibeto-Burman languages in the Sino-Tibetan family is still not certain. Thadou according to the records belongs to the Kuki-Chin group and the Northern-Chin sub group of languages (Grierson). Various linguists classify the Tibeto-Burman Language family differently. Shafer (1974) splits Tibeto-Burman into four main parts: Bodic, Baric, Burmic and Karenic. On the other hand, Benedict (1972) identifies seven subgroups: Tibetan-Tanauri, Bahing-Vayu, Abor-Miri-Dafla, Kachin, Burmese-Lolo, Bodo-Garo, and Kuki-Chin. Bradley (1997) summarizes the overall pattern of Tibeto-Burman, using Shafer and Benedict's classifications, as shown in the figures below.

Fig 1: Classification of Kuki-Chin Languages
Kuki-Chin



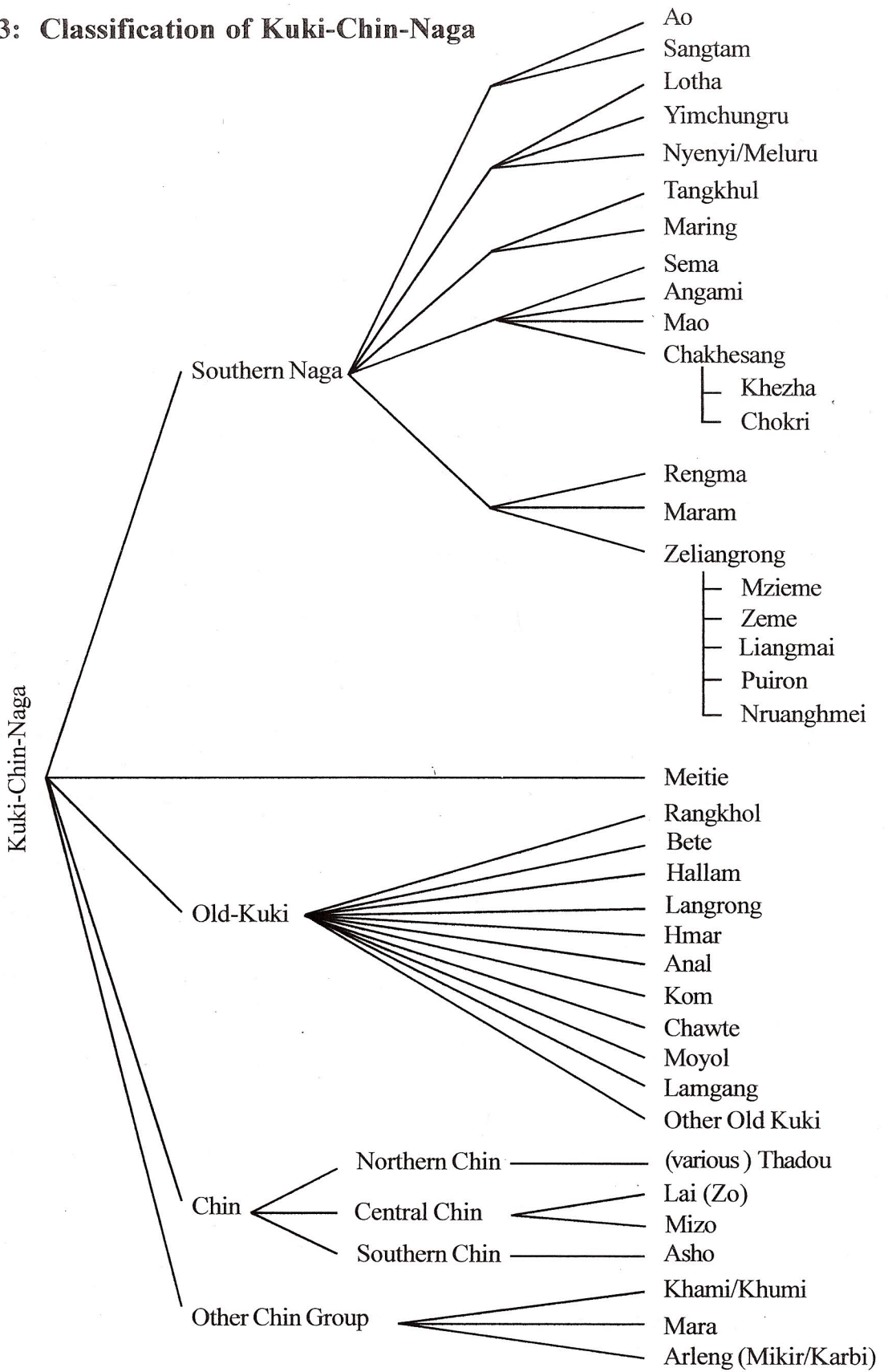
Classification of Chin subgroups (Bradley 1997)

Fig 2: Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese Speech Family



Classification of the Sino-Tibetan Language Family (Grierson, 1909-1928)

Fig 3: Classification of Kuki-Chin-Naga



Kuki-Chin-Naga (Bradley 1997)

1.5 Mythological and Historical Background:

As discussed earlier the origin of the word 'Kuki' is shrouded in myths, mythologies and conjectures. Several researchers and historians have run parallel to the claim that the Kukis came out of the bowels of the earth or a cave called Chinlung or Shionlung or Khul, the location of which was believed by some to be somewhere in China, but others claimed it to be in Tibet.(Ginzatuang, 1973:5). McCulloch (1857:55) contended that the Kukis were also known as Khongsai in Manipur. History has shown that the Kukis were great warriors; they waged battle against their enemies and occupied their territories after the war. One most accepted view about the origin of the Kuki which is found in stories and folk tales is that 'they used to live under the earth or hole. Their chief was known as Noimangpa. It is believed that one of Noimangpa's relatives called Chongthu went for hunting porcupines with his dog and discovered a large hole which was never occupied and there was great darkness all over. This darkness lasted for seven days and seven nights and is known as 'thimzing' which means darkness' by the Thadou-Kukis. Chongthu went back home and revealed to his people about his discovery. He also planned an idea of forming a village of his own in the hole. It so happened that Noimangpa was performing in a festival called 'Chon' in which all has to be present. To find an excuse of forming his own village Chongthu started waving his sword thereby injuring some folks. At this Noimangpa became angry and said; "Chongthu had better lived in heaven," by which he meant to kill Chongthu. The wrath of Noimangpa made Chonthu and Chongja the elder brother of Chongthu to host a feast in

preparation of their departure to the hole which is known as 'Khul' by the Thadous.

The story further goes that on reaching the 'Khul' a great snake called 'Gulhapi' attacked Chonthu's party and killed them with its tail. Chonthu was not thwarted in his ambition and attacked the snake and tied a cloth around him and killed the snake by cutting it into seven pieces. A lion also attempted to block Chongthu's way, but the lion withdrew and Chonthu's party moved into the hole. They found it was covered with a stone and one of Chonthu's parties called 'Vanlapa' lifted it up, but only seven of them managed to get out and the stone dropped and killed them. The seven persons who managed to get out were: Chongthu, Valalpa, Khupngam, Thadou and three other whose names were not known. Therefore during festivals when tracing the genealogical tree of the Thadou becomes necessary, the 'Thimpu' or priest starts from recounting the Thadou and not from Chonthu. Chongthu and Thadou spoke the same language and lived in peaceful co-existence. It is believed that the "Khul" is the source of the river 'Gun' which etymologically means the Imphal River. In all the stories of the Thadou the river 'Gun' is frequently mentioned and is of great fame. There are different stories with slight variations by different writers such as Shakespeare's and Shaw etc. The term 'Kuki', like Naga, and many others have definite meaning, and we identify the term with clans having peculiar characteristics, belonging to the Tibeto-Burman stock.

1.6 Culture and Society:

The emblem of the Kuki people is the hornbill, associated in Kuki legend with faithfulness, fidelity and loyalty. The society has witnessed a clear shift in the social life from pre-Christian era to present time. The conversion to Christianity has brought a lot of changes in the life style of the Thadou society but the practices and beliefs have been retained over the years. Before they embraced Christianity, they were headhunters and animists. The society is patriarchal and monogamous. [In the past, the hair knot position deferred from north to south;] Grierson (1904:552) says, ...the Siyins, Soktes, Thados, yos and whenos wear the hair in a knot on the nape of neck; the Tashons, yahaos, Hakhas, and the southerners generally tie it up on the top of the head, hence the name baungshe, because it is usually just over the forehead. Ancient religious beliefs and cultures are interwoven such that it is difficult to differentiate the cultures from beliefs. With the coming of Christianity brought by the American missionaries, some customs, such as spirit worship, head hunting and discrimination against women has changed. Today the majority of the Kukis are Christians.

They practice four types of marriages namely; Chongmu, Sahaprat, joltha, and kijammang. Among them bride price is customary. They prefer marriage with mother's brother's daughter, but never with father's sister's daughter. It is customary for them that a brother of Thadou tribe should take a deceased brother's widow as his wife although he may be a married man.

Rice is their staple food, they practice jhum cultivation. They have village chiefs who occupy the posts on a hereditary basis. Among the Thadou, land is owned mainly by the chief who gives it on rent basis to the villagers. They do not sow seed by sprinkling them over the soil; they dribble seeds into small holes made by hoe (tucha)

They are economically the most developed tribe in Manipur, holding most of the posts, even in the areas where they are a minority. They even work as interpreters (Limbu) and soldiers. Historically they had some connection with the Hindu Maharajas of Manipur. They helped Azad Hind Fouz (INA) which was organized by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to fight for the freedom of India against the British who have attacked INA on the central front of Manipur in the year 1944.

They bury their dead facing west wards. They believe that since the sun sets in the west similarly the head of the corpse should face towards the west direction. It is believed that east symbolizes life and west is for death. Prior to the coming of Christianity the children of the Kukis were forbidden to face the west while sleeping. Such cultural and traditional practices of the Thadou-Kukis are very rigid. So the entire life of the society revolves around these cultures and traditions which mark their identity as well.

The land of the Thadou-Kukis is blessed by a priest who performs certain rituals with rich customs and traditions. In the past there used to be a 'Sawm' a sort of boy's dormitory where the boys of a village would gather around

and sleep. The Sawm-nu (girl of the Sawm) took care of them, by washing the garments and making the beds, etc. Every Lawm (a traditional form of youth club) was an institution in which, boys and girls were engaged in social activities; for the benefit of the individuals and the community has lawm-upa (a senior member) and tangvo (assistant superintendent). Tollai-pao (overseer or superintendent), It is also another learning institution. Besides being a source of traditional learning, Lawm was also useful for imparting technical and practical knowledge to its members. The best students were recommended to the King's or the Chief's service, and eventually would become Semang and Pachong (ministers) in the courts, or gal lamkai (generals) in the army especially with regard to farming methods, hunting, fishing, and sporting activities such as Kung Kal (high jump, especially over a choice mithun), Kang Kap, Kangchoi Kap (top game), Suhtumkhaw (javelin throw using the heavy wooden implement for pounding or de-husking paddy) and Songse (shot put). The Lawm is also a centre where the young people learnt discipline and social etiquette. After harvest season, 'Lawm meet' is celebrated with a Lawm-se'l (on the occasion, a mithun is slaughtered for the feast) and, as a commemoration, a pillar is erected. The event is accompanied by dance and drinking rice-beer, which sometimes continues for days and nights.

The Kukis are renowned hunters and reputable warriors. Their hunting kit consists of Sellung-bawm (a leather waist-pouch for pellets), Se'lki meiloupai (an animal's horn for storing gunpowder) and a knife. Different kinds of traps and snares are used to trap animals big and small. The fishing equipment consists of Len (fishing net), Bawm (basket trap), Ngakoi (fishing hooks).

Ngoituh (a method of using dams and baskets in a flowing river), Ngalhei (draining out water) and Gusuh (a method of temporally stunning fish by using toxic herbs) were also common methods of catching fish in small streams. The killing of big animals will be followed by celebration where all the relatives and villagers are summoned on that occasion. The Kukis believe that big animals killed by them would accompany them after death and the spirits of animals would clear the onward path for them.

Changsuh (grain-pounding), Changsep (winnowing), Ponkhon (cloth-weaving) and looking after domestic animals are some of the daily chores of the women folk. Some of the commonly domesticated animals include Sel (mithun, which in the present day is very rare), dog, cow, buffalo, chicken and cat, etc.

The woven designs of the Kuki women are unique and appreciated the world over. Chang-ai, the place of honour for a good harvest was given to the lady of the house. This formed the highest honour accorded to the Kuki woman. The men folk make cane and bamboo crafts, buildings, take up the profession of blacksmith and also engage themselves in carpentry and other such similar jobs. They are specialized in profession of manufacturing guns and gunpowder. They also use Twi-changsu (water mill)' and Chotlep(a sea-saw mechanism), for pounding rice with minimum use of human energy. Sawh and Kengke (noise creating instruments) function as the scarecrow and are placed in the cultivated fields. Twisawh is made by running water from a stream making continual sounds to scare away birds and pests from standing crops. The Kukis believe that some documents, inscribed on

leather, known as 'Savun Lekhajo'l' (scroll), which they once possessed was lost in the passage of time made the Kukis believe that this is how they lost their script. Therefore, there is no known Kuki script or writing system. Today, the Roman script is introduced by missionaries for writing. They are also familiar with astronomy and astrology. They can predict and forecast certain aspects of nature, particularly rainfall, drought and the seasons by studying the stars and the moon.

When a girl attains marriageable age the parents would arrange her marriage. Before the marriage takes place bride-price will be discussed. The chief may grant relief to widows and orphans. Polygamy is not permissible, but this is not very rigid. The maximum penalty is 'bultuh' (stockade in which the guilty is kept outside the village and provided food until death). This reflects the high ethics of the Kuki people. The Kukis also practiced Twilut, a judicial process of judgment by going under water. Twilut is a phenomenon in which the litigants are subjected to go under water to determine the culprit. It is done where the normal processes of trial by court does not reach a conclusive end. In the event of resorting to twilut, certain customs are strictly adhered to. The chief and elders of the community call upon the thempu (magic-medicine man/priest) to conduct the proceedings. The 'thempu' then recites sacred chants, which includes the invocation of 'Pathen' (God), followed by the litigants being submerged in the water. The culprit becomes immediately apparent because she/he cannot remain underwater at all. But the innocent person will remain under water, quite normally.



1.7 Festivals:

The Kukis are lover of festivals and amusement. Every festival is connected with agricultural practices.

Mim Kut: This takes place sometimes in August-September during the harvesting of maize crop. It is celebrated with gaiety and merriment expressed through singing, dancing and drinking home made rice beer *zu*. Dedicated to the memory of their dead ones, and remembrance of the year's first harvest is placed as an offering on a raised platform built to the memory of the dead.

Chang Kut: This is a harvest festival celebrated during December by the whole community after rice harvest.

Chavang Kut: Of all the Kuts of the Kukis Chavang Kut has emerged as the most popular and enjoyable. This is a post harvest festival of Kuki, Chin, ^{and} Mizo Zomi which is observed as a state festival in Manipur.

Lawm Sel Neh: This festival is celebrated by young people of the community after the season's work is over.

Sa-Ai: This festival is celebrated in the event of a successful big game hunt of big animals.

Chang-Ai: This is also a harvest festival celebration after a bounteous rice harvest.

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

Kangkap: This is a game in which disc-like seed is rolled besides many others.

1.8 Musical Instruments:

The different kinds of musical instruments used by the Thadous includes Khong-pi (big drum), Khong-cha (small drum), Dah-pi(gong), Pengkul (trumpet), Gosem (bagpipe), Theile (flute), Theiphit (whistle), Selki (horn) and Lhemlhei (a peculiar mouth instrument) etc. They play these instruments during the festivals to make a festival grand.

1.9 Folklores:

The Thadou-Kukis have some famous folklores such as Galngam le Hangsai, Chemtatpa, Lengbante, Jamdil, Sangah le Ahpi, the poignant romances of Khupting le Ngambom, Jonlhing le Nanglhun, Changkhatpu le Ahshijolneng, Khalvompou le Lenchonghoi; and folktales, such as Chipinthei le Mailangkoh, and others, represent the rich variety of the Kuki culture which is the reflected in songs and music even in the present generation.

1.10 Clothing:

Traditional Kuki women wear their hair in two plaits braided around the head; they wear a Nih-San (a red slip) underneath a Ponve (a wrap-around), which is worn from above the chest. The ornaments include Bilba (earrings), Hah le Chao (bracelets and bangles), Khi (necklace), and occasionally Bilkam (a type of ring-shaped earring worn to stretch the earlobes). The Kuki male traditionally wore his hair long in the form of tucha (long haired rolled up in a bunch at the nape). His dress consisted of Boitong-Sangkhoh (half-sleeve jacket) and pheichawm (short lungi) worn around the waist and have one or more clothes to wrap around themselves over one shoulder or both. They

round the head with the ends or one end sticking up in the front. The Thadou man used a kind of turban called 'Dilkop' wrapped around their head.

The following are the most valuable clothing or puon of the Thadou:

- (i) Thangnangpon: (black colour background, embroidered at both ends, white, and yellow cotton; a shawl meant for man)
- (ii) Saipikhup: Colour same as (i) embroidered in different pattern, a shawl meant for man)
- (iii) Pondum: (plain dark blue with no border worn both by man and women)
- (iv) Ponmangvom white background cloth with one black stripe at each border; a shawl for women)
- (v) Ponlhe: (plain white, bigger than man's shawl, used as nightgown or winter shawl by both sexes)
- (vi) Del: (white thin lengthy cloth used as a 'pugri' meant for man)
- (vii) Phoi (a very thick white cloth made of coarse thread; the woof wads are used as the weft and fasted with coarse thread in between, used as a family night gown)
- (viii) Ponphoh: (plain cloth made of coarse thread used as night gown)
- (ix) Nih (inner skirt for women with a mixture of black and red thread in length)
- (x) Ponve: (lungi for women)
- (xi) Boitong sangkhol: (shirt woven with white thread sleeveless, no collar meant for man)