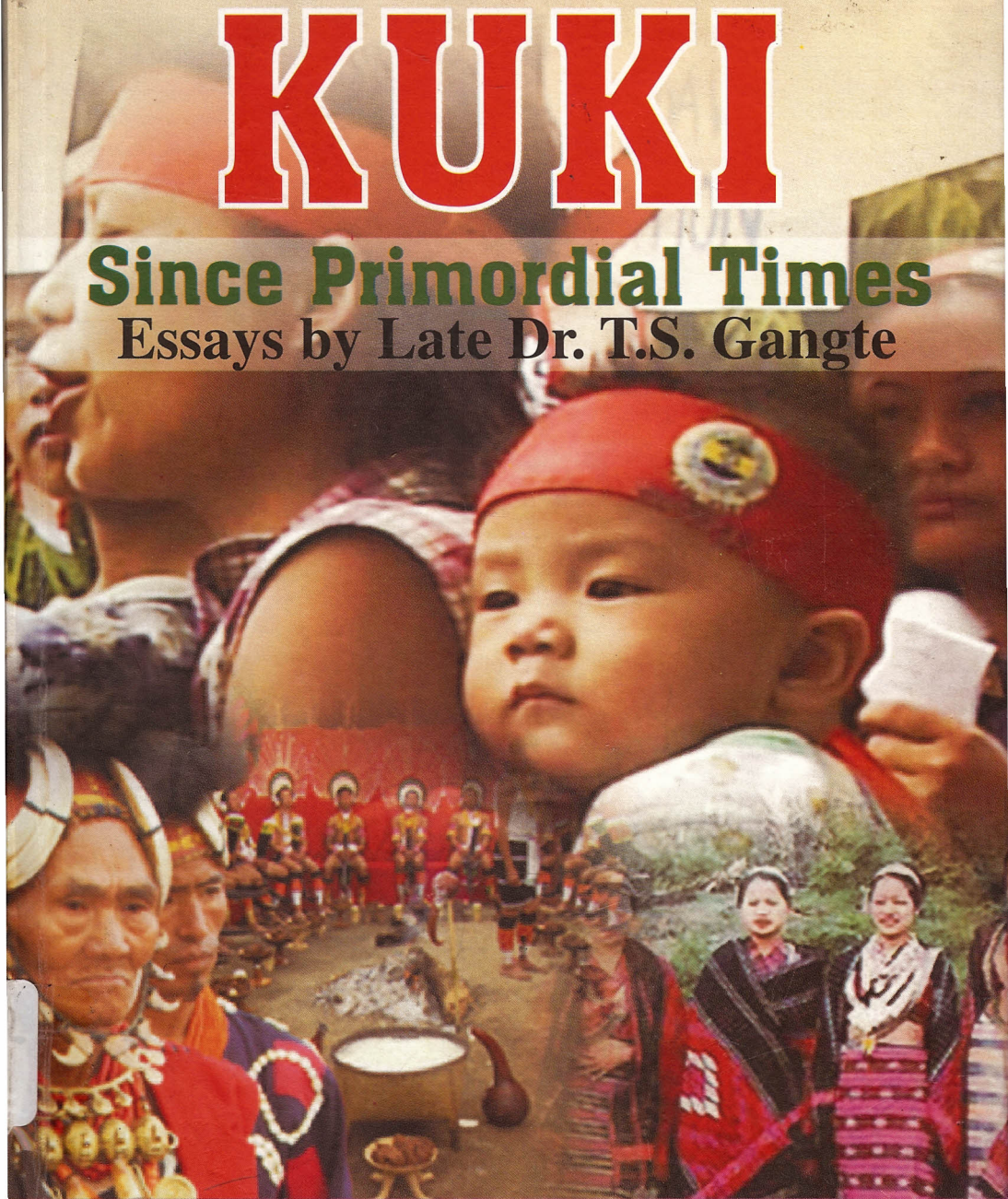


# UNDERSTANDING

# KUKI

## Since Primordial Times

Essays by Late Dr. T.S. Gangte



*Edited by*

**Aheibam Koireng Singh & Priyadarshni M.Gangte**

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## FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to write a brief foreword to this book by the Late Dr. T S. Gangte being published posthumously. The book brings together several unpublished papers by Dr. Gangte. These papers deal primarily with the history, culture, polity and the current predicament of the people known generally as the Kukis of Manipur. The Kukis have a very special and complex place in the demographic map of Manipur. It is impossible to understand Manipur and its problems without bringing the Kukis with their languages and cultures into the picture of what can only be described as the poignant existential predicament of present day Manipur. Dr. Gangte's book provides a lucid, sensitive and insightful glimpse into life of the Kukis and their interrelationship with the other communities of Manipur. I have no doubt that the book will prove useful to researchers, students and all others who may be interested in understanding the turmoil not just in Manipur but in the North-East as a whole. Editors of the book deserve much credit for their work.



Mrinal Miri  
Former Vice Chancellor  
NorthEastern Hills University

Chairman  
Forum of Vice Chancellors  
of  
Central Universities of North East India

## PREFACE

Tribes belonging to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo have close socio-cultural affinity in terms of their culture, traditions, language, custom, and traditional administrative system. They are one and the same people who were collectively called 'Kuki' in India and 'Chin' in Burma (present Myanmar). Kuki is one of the native ethnic communities in Manipur having its glorious past and rich cultural heritage. In the colonial past, the Kukis in Manipur in opposition of sending the Kukis as Labour Corps in France during the World War I have fought gallantly against the British rule. With the advent of Indian independence and implementation of Indian constitution, the Kuki identity undergoes a process of miniaturisation into various smaller intermediary identities and many of the erstwhile Kuki tribes have accepted the Naga identity. While an acceptable nomenclature for the Chin-Kuki-Mizo (CHIKIM) group is still eluding, fragmentation is further being heightened because of inherent idiosyncrasies on the basis of the hierarchical order of genealogy and other endogenous factors as well in addition to the activities of the armed outfits. In the last decade of the twentieth century, Kukis have faced various hardship and atrocities in the process of evicting them from their habitual residence for the realization of aspired homeland of the NSCN (IM) led Nagas. It also had miniaturised the Kuki identity further as some tribes belonging to the CHIKIM group, either out of fear or at their own volition had denounced the Kuki identity. This present volume gives a glimpse of the long evolutionary process the Kukis underwent since the primordial times to the present situation. Late Dr.TS Gangte, a trained sociologist who was among the few intellectual luminaries of the Kuki community, writes the entire chapters in the volume. His earlier publication, "The Kukis of Manipur" was well received for its illuminating insights and rich source material. Apart

from his academic accomplishments and administrative experience, the social commitment and obligations he had shown towards his society makes him the fit person to write on the subject matter. Dr. TS Gangte had left behind many unpublished manuscripts. The chapters in the present volume are selected from among those. His writings are forthrightly frank and spontaneous to the risk of sounding provocative. We in fact have many reservations in some parts but after consideration we stand that censoring it to just sound politically correct will be a great injustice to him. In Dr. Gangte's demise we have lost a person who epitomizes to us a friend, philosopher and guide. He really would have loved to see this book in print with a more fine-tuning and perfection but it's gods will that kept us apart from him. We sincerely pray for his well being in the heavenly abode. We as mere mortals extend our gratefulness to him by publishing his articles in book form which he could not achieve during his life time.

In the first chapter titled, *Facts and Fables of The Kukis of Manipur*, Dr. TS Gangte started with a premise that the Kukis living in Nagaland, Assam, Tripura and Manipur have closer cultural, traditional and ethnic affinity with the people of Mizoram, Chittagong Hills of Bangladesh and the Chins of Chin-Hills of Burma, rather than with their 'immediate neighbours' and that they aspire to live under a single political unit. While dwelling on the origin and migration of the Kuki he went on to say that Kukis of Manipur came at different periods of history starting from the pre-historic days. Thus, even though they belonged to the same ethnic group, time-gap in the waves of migration between different groups contributed greatly to their present wide-range of divergence and multiplicity. He concluded with an optimistic note that the independence of India brought a sea-change among the Kukis as they have become more politically conscious and socially sensitive and simultaneously the people of Manipur, the Meitei, the Muslims, the Nagas and the Kukis live peacefully as brethren to lift up the banner of Manipur ever higher.

The second chapter titled, *Indawi: Primeval Religion of Thadou Kukis*, at the very outset started by recalling the views of eminent scholars on 'primeval religion' who had contributed to the growth and development of knowledge on the subject matter. In it while

narrating a mythical story which is tied with the origin of 'Indawi Deity', and the elaborate ritual performance and formalities for worshipping it, he stated that 'Indawi' rites are individualistic in nature as it is not done on community basis. He concluded by drawing parallels with the 'Sanamahi' deity of the Meiteis of Manipur as according to him every family that worships 'Indawi' should have one 'Indawi' deity.

*Magico-Religious Beliefs and Practices among Migrant Kuki Tribes*, which constituted the third chapter, has been premised on the two aspects on the life of Kukis, that is, to project as to whether the Kukis are migrant tribes and the other is on the subject matter. It asserted that theories that have been advanced in connection with the genesis of Kukis are highly subjective and conjectural in the absence of any written corroboration of existence of historical evidence to support them. It seems to suggest that the Kukis are said to be migratory as the British found them in scattered when they came here in the eighteenth century and the British Officers started keeping records of the various clans or groups of Kukis at different places wherever they were found to have settled. While dealing with the subject matter, it stated that the monotheist Kukis, in olden days, were happy with one God who had no anthropomorphic form to appear before the people, demanding any special worship or offerings. But a few minor mischievous spirits have already occupied their vast supernatural Pantheon and it is they, in many cases, who demand rituals along with other formalities, like offerings and sacrifices. This colourful display of the rituals, through ceremonies, has cut across the familial cult and his covered, rather involved, other people (or such specific purposes to reinforce the group solidarity through bindings and obligations. It is quite discernable that the less affluence, leisure and free time of the people and their movement from one place to another, have practically set time people with limited world view and thus they have capsulised their group identities, it further stated. It concluded by stating that, slowly and inevitably, the force of conversion to Christianity proselytised the society drastically, though some have retained magico-religious beliefs and practices through their rituals and ceremonies.

The fourth chapter titled, *Structure of Thadou Society*, gives a narrative that the term Thadou is the name of eponymous ancestor of

descendants of Thadou who claimed to be descended from legendary progenitor called Chongthu, and that the controversies that almost wrecked the foundation of relationship between cousins among Thadous stemmed from strict enforcement of stringent principle of social structure based on respect and annual tribute paid to the senior lineal descent head being determined by regular male line of descent belonging to a single genealogical tree. Citing colonial accounts he articulated that their culture and tradition that bound the Kukis together gave them strength to fight against the British and that only when the Thadous are united the Kukis as a whole could do great things together in their contemporary socio-political scenario.

*Sawm: A Tradition of Non-Formal Education among the Kukis* gives a narrative of the institution of Sawm, which according to DR. TS Gange, the existence of this institution is imperative and crucial that the youth, the 'marginal man', has to be shaped and brought up into responsible adult member of the society. With the dawn of Western education where formal education takes its hold, importance of non-formal education through 'Sawm' membership has become less important though the institution as such continues to exist, he concluded.

In the sixth chapter, *Trial of the Kuki Chiefs*, Dr. TS Gange recalled the trial of ten Kuki Chiefs from Manipur along with three individuals in the persons of Ngulkhokhai of Chahsaad, Enjakhup of Thenjol village of Naga Hills and one Chinga Khamba Sana Chaoba Singh of Kumbi village under Section 16 of Chin Hills Regulation III of 1818 after the military Operations against the Kuki Chiefs under General Sir Henry Keary were officially closed on 20th May, 1919. In this landmark incident that is otherwise known as "Anglo-Kuki", which arose in opposition of sending the Kukis as Labour Corps in France during the World War I. Citing Sir Nicholas Beatson Bell, the Chief Commissioner of Assam province it stated that "the British Columns marched through hostile country overcoming opposition and destroying many enemy villages and property, but they had killed or captured very few of the enemy and no Chiefs of importance, while casualties on the part of the British were on the whole heavier than the enemy's."

The seventh chapter titled, *Chieftainship and Land Holding System in Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland* started with the premises

that 'Chieftainship', shall be understood within the parameter of 'Tribal Kuki and Mizo' societies where the Institution of 'Chieftainship' reigns solely supreme with absolutism and that the same shall hold true when dealt with 'land use system' under the shifting or Jhumming cultivation. It highlights the traditional Institution of Chieftainship and the manner in which land is used under it and the direct confrontation with the institution of chieftainship by the proletariats which gave birth to the nomenclature, Mizo, in place of Lushai and controversy over the 'Kuki' terminology, resulting in emergence of new nomenclatures and division of cohesive village communities into heterogeneous ethnic groups right from the village level to the highest, every imaginable group aspiring for separate and multifarious identities.

The eighth chapter titled, *British Policy towards Kukis* premises that the British Policy towards the Kukis has to be understood in the larger context of their policy towards the North-East India and Burma, it is also to be understood that the British policy towards the Kukis was related to their policy on North-East India and Burma, and the Anglo-Manipuri relationship had a direct bearing towards the Anglo-Kuki relationship. It articulated that the policy of the British towards the Kukis was one of gross inconsistency all through.

The ninth chapter titled, *Land Problem and Ethnic Tension in Northeast India with Special Reference to Manipur* at the very outset asserted that land problem is one that should inevitably occupy forefront issue of the people and the Government for solution. Among other thing it argue for the formation of a Committee of land enquiry Commission consisting of an equal number of Kukis and Nagas to be presided over by an impartial Government official to settle the land problems between the Kukis and the Nagas in Manipur hills amicably which is still not forthcoming from the part of the governance. It also highlights the onslaught against the Kukis allegedly by the NSCN (IM), which all started with the problem of land ownership and the refusal by the Kukis to pay land related taxes.

The tenth chapter entitled, *Role and Place of Indigenous Kukis in Upholding National Unity of Manipur*, he recalled briefly the historic past events of Manipur wherein the Kukis were active participants, their role and place were made crystal clear in regard to

upholding of the integration of Manipur. He conspicuously stated that the Kukis have all through the history of Manipur been the sole guardians to uphold integration of Manipur. He concluded with a note of optimism that the Kukis shall continue to shoulder their responsibility of safeguarding the territorial integration of Manipur notwithstanding what may say about them?

The eleventh article titled, *Problems of Identity Crisis among Tribals of Manipur* contended that the crises of ethnic identity or the division of identity among the tribals in Manipur is a recent phenomenon and is the outcome of recognition of different clans of 'Kuki' tribes as separate Scheduled Tribes. The identity crises would not have erupted and the 'Kukis' would have remained united like that of the Nagas if the smaller tribes belonging to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups had not been listed as separate tribe and given the constitutional benefits, he further added. In the conclusion it strongly puts forward the inevitability of initiating in-depth study of the culture, customs and linguistic commonness of the Kuki tribes to make proper modifications in the lists of Scheduled tribes in the interest of the country as a whole to arrest the fissiparous tendencies resulting from the discontentment to receive the recognition of ethnic identity.

*Ethnicity and Identity Management in Manipur*, which constitutes the twelfth chapter of the present volume, highlights that ethnic tribal Nagas are united under the blanket term 'Naga' identity, accepting whatever tribal ethnic appellation being given as individual or group identity in the scheduled list whereas the Kukis are engrossed with the problem of finding a common identity, being in the doldrums to accept the term 'Kuki' as such. It articulated that among the Kukis, the much-required expression of social solidarity by being identified 'Kuki' became redundant with the needed security and protection having been provided by the Constitution of India. The total sum result was that while recognised tribes wanted to maintain their separate identities, other tribes who have not so far been recognised created situations craving for the attention of the Government for according them the status of recognised tribes through organised ethnic activities. As against this, the term Naga has assumed the centripetal force, which unites heterogeneous tribal ethnic groups that converge around the Naga axis,

while at the same time maintaining their separate identity zealously. The term Naga became a prestigious ethnic identity for many small tribes of erstwhile Kukis, such as, the Anals, the Marings, etc. of Manipur in particular and the North-East India in general, it added. It further stated that non-conformity of the conservative Kuki tribes to social change resulting in conflict, tension, disunity, etc., is heightened by the arbitrary and haphazard categorization of tribes by the Government of India.

The thirteenth chapter titled, *Whither Kuki Ethnicity*, while highlighting the impact of the advent of Indian independence and subsequent constitutional measures on the Kuki tried to substantiate by citing empirical fallouts that it was the beginning for the disintegration of the Kukis, which is furthermore splintered by their inherent idiosyncratic and eccentric nature. It further added that among the Kuki the contestation over the nomenclature has turned into a centrifugal force, as against it, the term 'Naga' has become a centripetal Force that brings heterogeneous groups of people into its fold. Drawing parallels with diverse ethnic groups living in the UK as citizens thereof accepting their common ethnicity as British to that of the Naga it asserted that the Kukis need to cultivate similar spirit of Nagas.

*Festivity and Significance of Kut*, which constitutes the fourteenth chapter at the very outset started with the basic spirit of Kut festival aimed at disseminating the message of peace, friendship, brotherhood, compassion, forgiveness, etc., not only among the Chin-Kuki-Mizo people but also to mankind, it exhorted that the bounden duty of every Chin-Kuki-Mizo (CHIKIM) is to promote peace, unity and harmony through the spirit of Kut. It ended with a note of affirmation that the significance and benefit of Kut festival should reach the entire people of the region as a model move towards harmony and peace for humanity as a whole.

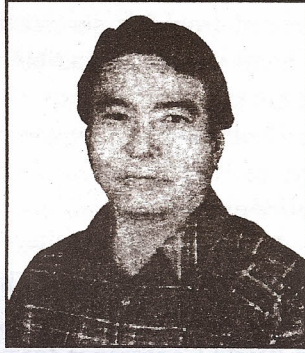
The fifteenth chapter titled, *Thirteenth September Black Day-Reminiscence of flagrant Violation of Human Rights* recalled one of the worst manifestation during the turbulent times of the Kuki-Naga clashes claiming 103 civilian lives on that single day which the Kukis still observed as 'Black Day'.

The sixteenth chapter titled, *Safeguarding of Identity and*

*Territorial Integrity of Manipur* asserted that creation of Nagaland and Mizoram out of the erstwhile 'Lushai Hills' District and 'Naga Hills' District of Assam on the basis of Shillong Accord and Mizo Accord led to the demand for integration of contiguous Naga and Kuki area to Nagaland and Mizoram respectively and such demand is vehemently being opposed by the people of Manipur. It concluded with by cautioning that the superfluous claim on the surface that the territorial integrity of Manipur is being assured which is classic of the politicians needs to be watched with vigil.

Many people have helped in realizing that this book comes to see the light of the day. Prof. Mrinal Miri, Former Vice Chancellor of North Eastern Hills University, Shillong and Chairman, Forum of Vice Chancellors of North East India readily comes forward to write the foreword after reading the prepared manuscript. We, therefore, take this opportunity to offer our profound sense of gratitude to him. We are also thankful to Mr. Shokholoun Touthang and Mr. N. Nobinchandra for typesetting the manuscript with due care at the least possible time. Thanks are also due to Dr. T.S. Gangte Memorial Trust for the all out support by standing solidly behind us in the endeavor of bringing out this publication. We also would like to express our gratefulness to all those whose names does not figure here but nonetheless extended their enthusiastic cooperation and contributed significantly in bringing out this volume in one way or the other. We are thankful to all of them.

We hope the brief glimpse of contents in the present volume will attract the curiosity and attention of the readers and will subsequently find it insightful and stimulating. With this cursory glance, it is now placed before the readers to meticulously engage with it.



## **A Brief Life Sketch of Dr. T. S. Gangte**

Thangkhomang Selpho Gangte, alias Mangcha, better known as Dr. T.S. Gangte, was born on 30th November, 1932 to Pu Lalkho Gangte and Pi Thangkhoneng Gangte, an educated family of the Gangte tribe of Manipur which was one of the families in Manipur to have received western education foremost. He was the third but one of the ten children. He had his early schooling i.e. upto Class VI at M. E. School in Ukhrul before and after the World War II. He had completed his matriculation at Johnstone High School, Imphal in 1954; Graduated from St. Anthony College, Shillong in 1959; obtained his M.A. (Sociology) degree in 1963 from Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi. While serving the backward tribal people of Manipur he did his research work and was awarded Doctor of Philosophy Degree (1990) from Anthropology Department, Calcutta University, West Bengal. Married to Lhingjaneng Sitlhou and Tingneihoih alias Priyadarshni Maisnam was blessed with four children - two daughters and two sons.

He was the founder Chairman of Council of Higher Secondary Education, Manipur, Director of Education (University & Hr. Education),

Chairman of Board of Secondary Education, Manipur, founder Principal, Churachandpur College, Churachandpur, the first college located in the tribal areas of Manipur for a long period of twenty-two years and also had been the Headmaster of Gandhi Memorial High School, Molnom, Churachandpur. He retired from his service in 1996. Dr. Gangte pioneered promotion of higher education in Manipur more specifically among the tribals in the hill areas of the State.

Dr. Gangte was a Fulbright scholar and as an alumnus thereof since 1985 for the study of Higher Education System in the states/America where he travelled extensively in Los Angeles, New Mexico, Orlando, New Carolina, South Carolina, Louisville, Washington and New York. He also widely travelled for attending international academic conferences in Mexico City, U.S.A., London, Frankfurt in 1982, represented India at the World Conference for peace at Copenhagen, Moscow and Athens in 1986 and 2000, and went to London, Paris and Madrid in 1990 to attend World Congress of Sociology.

He contributed several papers at International, National and State level seminars. He has to his credit several authored and co-authored accredited well acclaimed books among which "The Kukis of Manipur" and "Nehru and North East India" can be mentioned. He has left behind number of unpublished manuscripts including Anglo-Kuki Relations from 1849-1937. Moreover, he had published articles in reputed academic journals and presented papers at various for a in the State, national and international level.

Various other responsible and administrative positions he held during his life time in addition to the above mentioned are -

1. Member, Imphal Municipality in 1970;
2. Court Member, Gauhati University for 12 years;
3. Member, College Development Council;
4. Member, Council of Higher Secondary Education, Manipur for two terms; and
5. Member, Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre, Kolkata.

He was a regular Member of International Sociological Association, Vice-President of (i) Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology, Calcutta, and (ii) United Religious Initiatives.

After his retirement, he joined politics. He was the President

of Manipur Peace Committee. He was also the Vice President of Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM) and General Secretary of Gangte Peoples Convention (GPC). He was the Chairman of (i) the Anglo-Kuki War Patriots Memorial Foundation, Manipur; (ii) The Gangte Literature Society and (iii) The Thadou-Kuki Text Book Committee for Bachelor of Arts (BA) under Manipur University. He was also the advisor to the Committee of Coordination for Peace and Normalcy in Manipur.

He expired on 29th July 2007 (Sunday). Though he dies a sad man we remember all the moments shared with him and believe that he rests in peace in the heavenly abode. He remains an inseparable part of all of us.

## ABBREVIATIONS USED

ADC	=	Aid De Camp
AMSU	=	All Manipur Students' Union
AMUCO	=	All Manipur United Clubs Organisation
AR	=	Assam Rifles
BA	=	Bachelor of Arts
BC	=	Before Christ
BOSEM	=	Board of Secondary Education Manipur
CC	=	Chief Commissioner
CHIKM	=	Chin Kuki Mizo
CM	=	Chief Minister
ECI	=	Election Commission of India
FGN	=	Federal Government of Nagaland
GoI	=	Government of India
GoM	=	Government of Manipur
GPRN	=	Government of Peoples Republic of Nagaland
ICS	=	Indian Civil Service
INA	=	Indian National Army
MLR & LR	=	Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms
KNA	=	Kuki National Assembly
KNF	=	Kuki National Front
KYKL	=	Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup
LMG	=	Light Machine Gun
MIL	=	Major Indian Languages
MP	=	Member of Parliament
MLA	=	Member Legislative Assembly
NLG	=	Naga Lim Guard
NNC	=	Naga National Council

NPCC	=	Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee
NSCN (I)	=	National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac)
NSCN (IM)	=	National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac Muivah)
PLA	=	people Liberation Army
P.O.	=	Post Office
PREPAK	=	Peoples Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak
PSS	=	Praja Santi Sabha
SDO	=	Sub Divisional Officer
UDHR	=	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UK	=	United Kingdom
UNC	=	United Naga Council
UNO	=	United Nations Organisation
UNPO	=	Unrepresented Nations People Organisation
VIP	=	Very Important Person
ZRA	=	Zomi Revolutionary Army

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# 1

## FACTS AND FABLES OF THE KUKIS OF MANIPUR

### INTRODUCTION

It is true that the enchanting land known as the North-East Region of India attracted waves of diverse racial groups through ages. It has come to stay as the confluence of the most colourful mosaic of ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity<sup>1</sup>

The culture and tradition of the people often overlap the man-made political units of the region. Political loyalty mostly transcends the boundary of each political unit. The Kukis living in Nagaland, Assam, Tripura and Manipur have closer cultural, traditional and ethnic affinity with the people of Mizoram, Chittagong Hills of Bangladesh and the Chins of Chin-Hills of Burma, rather than with their immediate neighbours. They yearn to remain under a single political unit. Sometime ago movements with this end in view were started in Chin Hills of Burma under the leadership of Vumkhahau on the eve of Independence of Burma from the yoke of the British rule and for the unification of Zomi<sup>2</sup> under the banner of Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA) covering the areas now inhabited by the Kukis and the Mizos in Manipur, Assam, Tripura, Nagaland and Mizoram, though no much headway could be achieved to this end. However, in the absence of the recognised scheduled tribe of Manipur under the nomenclature Kuki, the people who were erstwhile known collectively as KUKI prefer to be known now as CHIN-KUKI-MIZO the abbreviation of which has been coined

as CHIKIM meaning thereby literally as All Races. His new aspect of development in this regard is the result of search for new identity which prevails all over the North-east of India among various ethnic groups so that they might assert themselves and take part as partners on equal footing in the growth and development of India.

The same holds good with the Nagas. Despite conspicuous nature at the height of diversity in ethnicity, culture, tradition, language, their peculiar emotional upsurge to integrate themselves, burying their hatchet of age-old war of attrition, under the nomenclature of 'Naga' and a language called 'Nagamese', which is pidgin Assamese, is indeed exemplary. This is solely due to the belief in the myth that all the Nagas have a common origin. This encouraged them to demand for a separate State for Nagas which eventually materialized. The Meiteis of the valley of Manipur are not lacking their brethren in the Hills in recent years demanding for the Independence of Manipur being led by various organisations, such as, PLA, PREPAK, etc.

These ethnic groups of Manipur came at different periods of history. Some of them came in the pre-historic days and the others came at different point of time of history. Thus, even though they belong to the same ethnic group, time-gap in the waves of migration between different groups contributed greatly to their present wide-range of divergence and multiplicity.

The Meiteis and the Muslims living in the centrally located valley of Manipur generally use 'Meitei-Lon' as their language. The Naga tribes of Manipur who can be broadly divided into the Tangkhul Naga, the Kabui Naga and the Mao Naga do not have a common language for their benefit through which they can communicate among themselves also identify themselves exclusively different from the others. They have to communicate among themselves in 'Meitei-Lon' alone. There is no other language for their common use.

In the case of the Kukis, however, despite divisions into many tribes and sub-tribes, they have no language barrier. They are able to communicate in their respective dialects, or use one of the dialects of any tribe depending on the person who uses the dialect.

As for the religion of the State, while the Meiteis, living in the

valley, are predominantly Hindu Vaishnavites, the tribals in the hills are increasingly embracing Christianity.

## ORIGIN

The origin of the Kukis (CHIKIM) is shrouded with myths and mythologies. One of such was the traditional accounts that had been handed down through generations in that the Kukis came out of the bowels of the earth or a cave called 'Chinlung' or 'Sinlung' or 'Khul', the location of which was believed by some to be somewhere in China. But others claimed it to be in Tibet.<sup>3</sup>

McCulloch<sup>4</sup> contended that the Kukis were known as 'Khongjai' also in Manipur, and that they:

... bring their progenitors from the bowels of the earth, and they relate the manner of their reaching its surface thus; One day their king's brother was hunting hedgehogs, when his dog in pursuit of one, entered a cavern, and he waiting for its return remained at the mouth. After lapse of sometime, the dog not having returned, its master determined to go in and see what had become of it. He did not find the dog, but observing its tracks and following them, he found himself suddenly on the surface of the earth. The scene presented to his view both pleased and astonished him. Returning to his brother, he related about his adventure, and counseled him to annex the new country to his territory, which the king did.

Likewise, Shaw<sup>5</sup> & Hutton<sup>6</sup> gave slightly different versions though they all pointed to the same story that the Kukis came from the bowel of the earth, called as, Chialung, or Shinlung, or Khul, etc. The story is obviously suggestive of a separate racial origin for these groups of people.

## MIGRATION

It was generally believed that the Kukis came out of China during the reign of Chinese Emperor Chinglung or Chie'nlung, around 200 BC. Zawla<sup>7</sup>, a Mizo historian, claimed that the Kukis came out of

the Great Wall of China in about 225 BC, during the reign of Shih Hungti whose cruelty was then at its height. A number of other theories have been advanced in this connection. But in the absence of any written corroboration of existence of historical evidence to support them, such hypothetical theories re considered as highly subjective and conjectural. These are, therefore, taken with a pinch of salt. They remained only as legends.

Nevertheless, Enriquez<sup>8</sup> was emphatic in his claim in that he thought he had ample scientific data at his command to prove that Mongolian races, who now occupy South-East Asia, and also the North-East India, originated from the Western China lying between the sources of the Yangtze and the Hwang-Ho rivers, and migrated in three waves as follows:

1. The Non-Khmer (Talaing, Pa Lung, En Riang, Wa, Pale, Khais and Annimite) which included Khasis ;
2. The Tibeto-Burman comprising Pyu-Burmese-Kachin, Kuki-Chin and Lolo;
3. The Tai-Chinese which included Shan, Siamese and Karen.

The route-chart of the Mon-Khmer group was that they followed the Mekong valley towards south into Campuchea and Thailand until they reached Burma wherefrom some of them went further westward upto Bay of Bengal and then turned towards north. It is believed that the Khasis are the remnants of the Mon-Khmer group.

The Tibeto-Burman group initially moved towards the west and thereafter sub-divided themselves into several groups. They followed different routes, one group reaching Tibet on the north where some of them stayed behind, while others moved on northwards until they reached Burma in three waves. These people were the Kuki-Chin and the Pyu-Burmese-Kachin groups. While the latter stuck to this place, the Kuki-Chin group moved further towards south-west following the Irrawady and the Chindwin rivers and continued to do so till they reached the shores of the Bay of Bengal. From here they turned back north and eventually fanned out along the mountains down the whole length and breadth of the hilly region on either side of the existing Indo-Burma

boundary lines. Thus when the British came here in the eighteenth century, they found the groups scattered about, and the British Officers started keeping records of the various clans or groups of Kukis at different places wherever they were found to have settled.

Hutton (1929)<sup>9</sup> in one of his monographs described the migratory routes of the Kukis in a lucid manner, and was more specific in regard to the scattered settlements of the Kukis:

For a very long time the Kuki-Chin groups of tribes, pressed from behind Kachins moving southwards from China, and been migrating down the course of the Chindwin River, and some turned back perhaps by the Bay of Bengal, had then moved slowly northwest and northwards again, driving out or incorporating previous inhabitants of what are now parts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of (East Pakistan), the Chin Hills of Burma, the Lushai Hills of Assam, parts of the areas of Manipur State, the North Cachar Hills and the south of the Naga Hills.

Lehman<sup>10</sup> observed:

History shows, however, that both hills and plains peoples (of Manipur) have moved about within the general region of South-west China and South-East Asia over considerable distances for many centuries until the recent past.

Taw Sien Kho, a Burmese lecturer at Cambridge classified the Kukis as Turanean<sup>11</sup> which included the Chinese, Manchus, Japanese, Annamese, Siamese, Burmese, Turks, etc, and concluded that their habit included the whole of North-Eastern India before the Aryan conquest.

## ORIGIN OF THE TERM KUKI

Lieut. Col. Reid<sup>12</sup> said that the term Kuki came into use to denote a particular type of people:

Previous to the expedition of 1871-72 the wild tribes, which had been in the habit of raiding our North-Eastern Frontier,

were generally spoken of as 'Kukis', Bengali word meaning hillmen or highlanders. The word was originally applied to the tribe or tribes occupying the tract immediately to the south of Cachar. It is now employed, in a comprehensive sense, to indicate all those living to the west of the Kaladyne River, while those to the east are designated Shendus. On the other hand, to anyone approaching them from the Burma side the Shendus would be known as Chins, ... synonymous with Khyen and pronounced as 'Chin'.

He further propounded that the Chins called themselves as 'Lai'. Considering their distinctive characteristics in dress and dialects, there can be little doubt that the Chins, the Kukis, the Lushais, and the various tribes are practically of one and the same race and were included under the term 'KUKI' since the days of Warren Hastings.

Lalthangliana<sup>13</sup> claimed that the word 'Chin' in Burma was synonymous to the word 'Kuki' and 'Mizo' in India. He further contended that though the reason was not known, the Burmese called the people living in the North-west Burma and the North-East India as 'Chin'. In explaining the reason why the Burmese called the Kukis as Chins he inferred:

Perhaps they were always found carrying on their backs bamboo baskets called 'Chin' by the Burmese. But this particular Burmese word also means friendship and by a stretch of imagination one could say that once there two people live very closely together. Since there were relations not pertaining strictly to friendliness, I think the explanation "Man with the basket" is most reasonable.

Captain Lewin<sup>14</sup> said:

the Kukis were 'men who live far in the interior parts of the hills, and have not the use of fire arms, and whose bodies go unclothed' and were known to the Bengalees by the name of Kookie and the Burmese as the Lakhe.

Col. Dalton<sup>15</sup> described them as:

“... a nation of hunters and warriors, rules as a nation by their principal hereditary chiefs or rajahs, but divided into clans, each under its own chiefs”.

Soppit<sup>16</sup> while studying the Lushais remarked that

“the designation of ‘Kuki’ is never used by the tribes themselves, though many of them answer to it when addressed, from knowing it to be the Bengali or Plains term for their people”.

Lt. Col. Shakespear<sup>17</sup> who was one of the authorities on the Kukis, said that

the term ‘Kuki’ 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 Tracts; in Cachar it generally means some family of Thado or Khawtlang clan, locally distinguished as new Kuki and old Kuki. Now-a-days, 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 Chins... that these Kukis are also closely allied to the ‘Chukmas’, and that the Lushais are more closely allied to the Chiru, Kom, Khawtlang families and are also related to their eastern neighbours who are known as Chins.

He concluded, “Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the Kukis, Chins and Lushais re all of the same race. Likewise, while dealing with the Chin Tribes of Burma Carey and Tuck<sup>18</sup> said,

Without pretending to speak with authorities on the subjects, we think we may reasonably accept the theory that the

Kukis of Manipur, the Lushais of Bengal and Assam, and the Chins, originally lived in what is now known as Tibet and are of one and the collection, manners and customs, beliefs and traditions, all point to one origin.

Shaw<sup>19</sup> a Civil Servant, whose work on the Thadou Kukis provoked a lot of controversy which led to the disintegration of the Kukis in modern days stated:

The Koms, Aimols, Khawtlangs, Thadous, Lushais, Chins, Pois, Suktes, Paites, Gangtes, etc., are undoubtedly all connected and are Kukis, and that the language alone has many similarities and the syntax is not dissimilar. Again, there are their customs, which have common principle running through them all.

With the advent of Indian Independence, however, the situation has taken a sea-change among the Kukis and nobody can differentiate for sure between a Kuki and a Manipuri. These people have now become more politically conscious and socially sensitive. And yet, the people of Manipur, the Meitei Vaishnavites, the Muslims, the Nagas and the Kukis live peacefully as brethren to lift up the banner of Manipur ever higher.

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