

THE PAITE

A Transborder Tribe of
India and Burma

II. Kamkhenthang

Foreword:

B.K. Roy Burmah

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Foreword

Inndongta or household-council is considered by the Paites of South Manipur district as a unique feature of their community life. Though analogous institutions are found among some of the neighbouring tribes of Lushai-Kuki group, the Paites feel that it flourishes in its full form among them only. Dr. Kamkhenthang who is a trained anthropologist and also a leading intellectual of the Paite community has given a descriptive account of the institution. According to him knowledge of the working of the inndongta institution is a pre-requisite to the understanding of the structure of Paite society.

✕ The Paites belong to the Northern Chin sub-group of Kuki-Chin congerity of people, whose initial process of identity formation is geographically associated with Chin state of Burma. It is believed that their ancestors had migrated there through stages from South-West China. Lehman (*The Structure of Chin Society*, 1963:3) observes that the name Chin might have been derived from the Burmese word 'Khyan', which means "ally or comrade". In this study Kamkhenthang has discussed in some detail the process of ethnic boundary delineation of the Paites. The population who constitute the core of the Paite ethnic entity is also known as 'Tedim Chin' after the geographical area of the same name in Chin state. It is believed that the term Tedim Chin came in vogue some time after the advent of Pax Britannica in the region in the last part of the nineteenth century. Before that they were more

known by the names of the clans which had established their "supra-local" hegemonic sway. Two of the clans, namely Sukte and Gwite, particularly the former, were looked upon as spectres of terror in the region in the 19th century. But they and their agnate groups in their turn were victims of cruel sleighs of history. They were either unsettled again and again from their habitats or were required to adjust their survived strategies to the extension of Burmese influence from the South, emergence and subsequent eclipse of Shan state structure, entrenchment of state power of Burma, formation of state and state-like politico-administrative entities in Arakan, Tripura, Manipur, and Assam and last but not the least to the lengthening shadow of British colonial domination since the latter part of the 18th century. It would not be surprising if their collective world-view was tinged with a sense of extreme insecurity and existential agony. They suffered, caused suffering and suffered more. It was a vicious circle.

It seems that in the early days the Chins were termed as "allies", because they held the flank of the developing Burmese state against its enemies such as the Sak (Thet.) Later the Chins made political use of the Burmese and the Shans fleeing from defeat in their mutual quarrels. These refugees became organizational and symbolic focuses for strengthening certain of the Chin chieftaincies. (Lehman: *op cit*, pp. 24-27).

Grierson makes a mention of two other powerful peoples, the Zeheu and Wheno, who also were at one time known as Poite or Paite (*Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. III, part VI, p. 82). There are also lesser clans, the Hause, Tanbing, Naulak, Leibong etc, who are included among the people who are now known as Paites. Very often, however, they were not independent political entities. They were satellite social entities of one or the other of the more powerful groups and perhaps they felt that these names as identity-markers provided protective shields to them. But at the same time Hualngo and Lushai people used to call all population between Lushai Hill and Falam Chins as Paite or Paihte, in a rather derogatory sense. Now the term is interpreted to indicate their migratory habit.

They are from
Chin State Burma.

Another term which is often associated with the Paites by the administrator, but which the Paites resent, is 'Kuki'. It is considered to be a derogatory term given to the Chins who migrated to Assam, Manipur and Tripura during the 16th to 18th century; it is also given to the Thadous who migrated from present day Mizoram to Cachar district of Assam and to Manipur in the early 19th century. But the earlier migrants and the Thadous are differentiated as Old Kukis and New Kukis respectively. The Paites who started coming to Manipur directly from Tedim Chin in the latter part of 19th century, assert that they are too late comers, to be termed even as New Kukis. But it appears that they are not without dilemmas in this regard. As mentioned by Kamkhenthang, in 1940's the Thadous invited them to consolidate the Kuki entho-social entity. A Kuki National Assembly was convened. The Paites participated in it, but could not come to an agreement. It seems that they suspect that the Thadous regard themselves only as 'Kuki proper' and the Paites as 'Pseudo Kukis' or 'half Kukis'.

The scenario that takes shape in one's mind's eye is that of chronic marginalisation of the Paites in all situations where they collectively interact as a social formation with other collectivities of the same level.

In this context of external marginalisation, an overwhelming angst for internal reinforcement is understandable. In a phenomenological appraisal, one would like to feel that this provides the setting for the inndongta institution to flourish. This reflects a world-view of consolidation through fragmentation and choice. The underlying organising principle is different from that of classic segmentary system.

Kamkhenthang's report is based on his study in the village Lungchin. It is located just at the Indo-Burma border. Again on Indian side it marks the junction of Manipur and Mizoram and on the Burma side, it meets the Chin state. While considering the account furnished in the report, the possibility that borders freeze changes in social organisation is also to be kept in view. This helps to look into the comparative data provided in the report in respect of other villages, in proper perspective.

† The Paites recognise that like beads in a garland, the households in a village are tied up with one another by invisible strings of reciprocal obligations and expectations. The obligations and expectations are differentiated in terms of structural relationships with members of wife-taking, wife-giving and ego's lineage as well as with selected persons of the village who do not belong to any of these categories.

Every Paite household has its own inndongta. At the time when a son or a brother separates from his parental home, an inndongta is instituted for him on the initiative of his father or elder brother as the case may be. It is a formal organisation with recognised functionaries.

1. Tanupi or principal tanu (*Tanu* is daughter, *Pi* is great).
2. Tanunau or lesser tanu (*Nau*=*pung* or younger).
3. Tanuthumna or sisom or sibawl or third tanu (*Thumna* =third; *si*=dead; *bawl*=to treat or to make; *sisom*= who attends one to the dead).
4. Tanulina or fourth tanu.
5. Thallough or Bangku (*Thal*=arrow; to *louh*=to repay, hence an arrow compensator).
6. Thuse or Thusapi or vengtause (director).
7. Thallouh thuse (protector-cum-director).
8. Thallouh mang or tanzupung or Bangkomei (the tail of the door of the lesser thallouh).
9. Pupi (mother's father or brother when he plays the central role in a ceremony).
10. Punau (Mother's father or brother when he plays a subsidiary role in a ceremony).
11. Zawl (intimate friend).
12. Behavaal or sanggam sialbawl (extra member of the lineage or extra-sibling).
13. Nuphalpi (sister of wife, when she plays principal role in a ceremony).
14. Nuphal nau (sister of wife, when she plays minor role in a ceremony).

The word "tanu" means a daughter. In the ritual sphere the meaning of the term is extended to cover all the married sisters and daughters of a father. In a wider sense it can also

include all married women of the male ego's lineage. In the context of inndongta institution however tanu is a ritual office. It is held by a married sister of the head of the household. No unmarried woman can become tanu. On the other hand once a married woman assumes the ritual status of tanu to the household of a male relation in her father's line all the members of her household get affiliated in tanu relationship to all the members of the household of the concerned male relation. Even her husband is treated as a male tanu.

Here it is to be noted that a principle of selection operates in requesting a sister to be tanu. Normally the eldest amongst the surviving sisters of father is expected to be requested to be the principal tanu (tanupi) by the eldest among her brother's sons. But any of the sisters of the father can be requested to be tanupi in preference to her. Similarly in the absence of a surviving married sister of the father, the eldest among the ego's sister is expected to be tanupi of the eldest among her brothers. But the brother may choose one of the other sisters to be tanupi. Kamkhenthang has cited one such case. It, however, seems from the data furnished by him that such structural flexibility does not operate in real life, without causing mental strain.

As against flexibility within certain limit in the choice of tanu, the generation principle operates more strictly in some villages in the tanu household. For instance, it has been reported that at Vangmual of Tedim sub-division in Burma, if the husband's father of the tanupi lives in the same household with herself and her husband, it is the husband's father and not the husband who would be member of the household-council of her brother or brother's son.

As already indicated, there are different grades of tanu in one's inndongta. The tanus of different grades are also known by different names on different occasions. While all tanus are to jointly take the responsibility of dressing the meat during ceremonial occasions, tanupi is regarded as the principal cook. She also serves as tuampi (principal wrapper) on the occasion of the death of any member of the referent household. Tanunau (lesser tanu) is tuamnau, who plays the

subsidiary role of holding the cloth for wrapping the body, the tanuthuma is either a sibawl (dresser of the corpse) or a sisom (attendant of the corpse). Tanulina is gaunawl; he is to be with the body till its disposal. Earlier when the dead body used to be preserved for quite some time through subjecting it to smoke, the tanulina had to keep constant watch. It was a physical ordeal for him and he had to suffer the bad smell and stink.

At Lungchin no household has more than four grades of tanus. Any tanu after the fourth grade is called tanuvaal (extra tanu). Members of tanuvaal are involved in big feasts like feasts of merit and mortuary feasts. They are to help the graded members of the tanu on such occasions.

There is a common saying "gaul sak gawl kang phong tanuahi" (a son-in-law as tanu is to raise up the fallen fence around the house of his father-in-law). This indicates that the tanus are immediate helpers and are supposed to be available at the disposal of the wife-giver.

* In terms of kinship obligation, the relationship between wife-givers and wife-takers is expressed as puu-tu relationship. The wife-receiver is also described as mask or maskpe in relation to the wife-giver. Conversely the wife-giver is described as sung or sungpo in relation to wife-receiver. These terms however, do not pertain to the concerned individuals only; these are extended to the members of their respective lineages.

The relationship of this kind while confirming the view of Levi Strauss (quoted in *Elementary Structures Reconsidered*, p. 4) that kinship systems are expressions of sort of exchange between groups, implies institutionalisation of inequality among the affinals. The harshness of the system can be mitigated through symmetrical cross-cousin marriage or through cyclic arrangement in which members of lineage or clan A give their daughters to lineage or clan B who in turn give their daughters to lineage or clan C from whom on the closure of the cycle, A take their wives. This arrangement may become diluted by the presence of other intervening lineages, or clans without vitiating the underlying structural principle. As reported by Kamkhenthang, while mother's father's

daughter marriage is a preferred form, father's sister's daughter marriage is strictly prohibited. The actual incidence of marriage with mother's brother's daughter or in the lineage of mother's brother's daughter has not been reported. But logically it can be seen that preference for marriage with mother's brother's daughter at the ideological plane leaves considerable loophole for the cyclic chain not to be completed. In contrast, among the Purums, another tribe of Manipur which were described by earlier ethnographers as old Kuki and who now claim to be Nagas, Das has reported in his book "The Purum" (1945) the presence of marriage cycle, facilitated by 'prescriptive' mother's brother's daughter marriage at the ideological plane to the exclusion of father's sister's daughter marriage. As analysed by Needham, in the system described by Das, wife-givers are superior to wife-takers. Needham further suggests in his article published in the *American Anthropologist* (Vol. 60, No. 1, Feb. 1958) that in systems of matrilateral connubium it is commonly the case. But in view of the fact that the wife-taking group may be identical with the wife-giving group of one's wife-givers, in the balance all the groups may find themselves vicariously compensated. But this may not be the case where the cycle of exchange of daughters is not complete.

In the inndongta institution of the Paites there are, however, certain graded differentiations of symbolic privileges associated with graded differentiations of the responsibilities of tanus. When a game is hunted or on various ceremonial occasions different portions of meat from the different parts of the body of the killed animal, are given to the principal tanu and lesser tanus. Besides, the institution provides an opportunity for the married sisters and daughters to visit their parental homes and perform important roles. This provides deep emotional satisfaction to them, though this may mean strenuous labour on their part and on the other members of their respective husbands' households, on repeated occasions.

Apart from Tanupi, a central figure in the institution of inndongta is the thallough or ibongkua. Normally he is the father or father's brother or married elder brother or the head of the household living separately. He is a potential holder

of the properties and dues of the head of the household, in case the latter dies without a male issue. A man holding the office of thallouh is almost as much responsible as the head of the household for the welfare of the household. His office is also known as bungkua. Literally it means a hole made in the wall to facilitate entry to and exit from the house. When the members of the household-council meet to take some joint decision, as in case of the settlement of a marriage negotiation, the thallouh conducts the discussion. In Paite ideology he, not the head of the household, is the keyman on such occasions.

Supplementary investigation by Kamkhenthang suggests that among the Paites maximal lineage is counted upto three generations above the ego; beyond that lineage tie is not recognised and marriage within the same clan is allowed, though not much favoured by the commoners. Perhaps the shallow generation-depth of the maximal lineage is related to the their migratory habit. In the absence of married brothers, a thallouh must be a member of the maximal lineage.

Another key functionary is thusapi. Thusa stands for a person who arranges or facilitates the settlement of any affair. Thusapi is also invariably known as vengthusa (meaning a thusa recruited from among the villagers). He must be a person belonging to a clan other than one's own. Being a person, who is not a member of the same clan, he can serve as a go-between, in disputes with other households; also he can be a conciliator of emotional conflict among the members of the same inndongta.

An interesting office is that of thallough-thusa. He belongs to the same descent group as the head of the household. As the name implies he has subsidiary roles of both a thallough and a thusa.

An office with a pompous title, but hardly any responsibility is thallouhmang. "Mang" means majestic. Literally the office stands for a thallough who holds a majestic position. But this is an euphemism. Actually this office is meant for the youngest brother who does not hold any other office. But he is also called hanzutung, which means, "one who provides rice

beer at the grave". A third term for the same incumbent is thusamei" or 'the tail of the thusa group'.

On behalf of the wife-giver households, mother's brother of the head of the household and as well as his wife's father or wife's brother as the case may be, are also part of the inndongta institution; but their roles go on changing according to the situational context. In matters concerning the head of the household himself, the prior position is given to his mother's father or mother's brother; he is called pupi, and on such occasions the wife's father or wife's brother is called punau. But in matters concerning the children of the head of the household, there is a reversal of status. Wife's father or brother assumes the prior position and is regarded as pupi; mother's father or brother is regarded as punau. As the head of the wife-giver household puu is specially treated on ceremonial occasions. He is given the best part of the rice beer; on the other hand he is not employed in menial services like cutting, chopping and cooking meat. He is also not expected to distribute rice-beer to others. But often he joins the male tanu members and members of thusa group in these tasks, as a matter of personal gesture. Presence of one zawl or intimate confidant of the head of the household, who belongs to a clan or lineage other than that off his own, imparts another dimension to the household-council. Every household is supposed to have a zawl and to be a zawl on reciprocal basis. Kamkhenthang considers zawl relationship to be analogous to the African system of blood-brotherhood. There is a saying among the Paties, 'zawl phula' which means that zawl is an avenger. In the past the main function of zawl relationship was to help one another in vindictive feuds. Now old type of vindictive feud is not possible; but zawl shares the innermost agony of his friend. He is entitled to certain parts of the meat such as the head, heart, lungs and intestine, which are ritually called phungea and are ordinarily reserved for the members of the same lineage or the clan. The zawl relationship is found among the Thadous-also. But there is a difference. A Thadou has zawls in other than his own village, so that he can put up with them in the course of his journey. But a Paite has zawl in his own village only, so that both can

become members of one another's inndongta. There is some instability in zawl relationship; it can for instance be terminated on migration.

Wife's married sister is also a member of one's inndongta, and it seems to be more on sentimental ground than on any structural principle. Natural tie of affection of the sisters is of course there; but it does not provide any base for connubial tie nor does it bind the two households in protective responsibilities in respect of external enemies. It is however to a certain extent internalisation of a common external concern. Both the sisters and their husbands hold different grades of tanu position in the father's or brother's household of the sisters. As wife-takers from the same wife-giver minimal lineage, they share common emotional and workloads; and extension of the same in one another's inndongta would become an act of grace. But there is also a hidden spring which surfaces itself in exceptional circumstances and harmonises with the structural principle of constitution of an inndongta. If there is no female member of the same lineage in a village to hold the office of tanu, a man can name his wife's sister as tanu. Not in biological terms, but as a repository of a sentiment that a man has for his sister, she is equated with his sister. Membership of a married sister's household in the inndongta is thus not entirely outside the orbit of the structural principle enunciated earlier.

When one looks at the totality of the inndongta institution, certain interesting features come out. There are role differentiations of members of inndongta, at the same time inndongta members meet as corporate entities on some occasions.

Though male members of wife-giver (mother's brother; wife's father) or wife-taker (father's sister's husband, sister's husband) are recruited to the inndongta through their wives, in the decision making process of the inndongta as corporate groups, the female members do not play any role. Decision making is a prerogative of the males.

Where the roles of the members of the inndongta are expressed symbolically, two types of symbols are used. One

is related to shelter; the other is related to war and chase. Both refer to a functionary who belongs to ego's own lineage.

The offices held by the members from wife-giver group are just mentioned without descriptive elaboration. They have ritual roles in a fluctuating manner; but they do not have any institutionally prescribed service role.

In case of the members from wife-taker group, two and sometimes three alternative terms are used. One set of terms are to indicate the name and grade of the office; the other set of terms describe their roles primarily in case of death in the referent household; for one office the role in a feast has also been descriptively indicated. But Kamkhenthang has also reported in some detail, rigidly prescribed roles of the members of ego's and wife-taker's household during such labour intensive skilled activities as construction of a house. The three members of the thusa, namely thusapi, thalluthusa and thallouh-mang do not climb up the roof for thatching or demolishing it. They take different positions on the ground and direct and assist the work. The members of tanu household first remain busy in cooking food for the workers; after that they join the other workers in the construction. During jhum cultivation also food for workers is cooked by members of tanu and the members of the inndongta constitute the core of the labour-group.

As suggested earlier preferential cross-cousin marriage of only one type (M.B.D.) does not logically indicate the presence of a marriage cycle; in that case one may ask whether service activities of wife-taker group under ritual cover of inndongta institution implies some system of perpetuation of economic and political domination of certain lineages or Kin groups. In this matter the data furnished by Kamkhenthang provide a very interesting clue. Historically the Gwites are one of the aristocratic clans of the Paites. At Lungchin, the chief belongs to this clan. In respect of another tribe of the Kuki-Chin group, the Hmars, Rizvi has reported in his paper entitled "Consanguinity among the Hmars of Manipur" (1985) that the chiefs tend to marry in chiefs' families from other villages and in the absence of compatible wife-takers, there is a problem of spinsterhood among them. Among the Paites

of Lungchin, spinsterhood for absence of compatible wife-taker is not recognised as a problem, but among the Gwites out of 23 cases of wife-taking as many as 14 were from within the clan itself, the rest were from other clans. In contrast only one case each of marrying within same clan has been reported for three other clans, out of 13 in the village. As has been mentioned earlier, the depth of the maximal lineage among the Paites is only three generations and this makes marriage in the same clan possible. It is also found from the data furnished by Kamkhenthang that good number of Gwites marry outside the village.

While the Gwites have taken only 9 wives from other than Gwite clan within the village, they have given 19 daughters to persons of other clans within the village. While by taking wives from other villages they escape to a considerable extent the rigours of servile works for the wife-giver group, by giving daughters to a proportionately larger number of persons of other clans in the same village, they obtain more services from those households. Thus through such bio-social transactions, where women form the nexus, a process of primitive accumulation is kept going among the Gwites. In a personal communication Kamkhenthang mentions that the superiority stance of the Gwites is resented by co-villagers.

In the context of the existence of a process of primitive accumulation even in the traditional setting of the Paites, a question that arises is whether the Paites are a ranked society or a stratified society. In the ranked society while there is status differentiation and difference in the accumulation of wealth, there is not much difference in the style of living and social mixing. The perception of inndongta as an "inevitable" institution, in the words of Sawn Pau, a Tedim Chin researcher ("Research on Some Aspects of Tedim Chin Culture" in *Chin Magazine*), the composition of the inndongta where one non-clan member as thusa and one clan member as thalough-thusa, play important bridge roles between the household and the co-villagers, the culturally prescribed central role of wife-taker households in feasts and the elaborate mechanism of sharing some objects with different categories of inndongta members, suggest that in their tribal setting the Paites

should still be considered as a ranked society rather than a stratified one. The presence of zawl or an 'avenge' friend from outside own clan, while is a relic of the days of endless feuds and wars, imparts further openness to the social structure.

There is an aspect of functional differentiation within inndongta which deserves mention. Taking a broad overview, the role of one's own lineage members is that of providing solidarity in external transactions and extending assistance in some of the activities of economic nature, the mother's brother and wife's brother have limited ceremonial role linked up with specific members of household, rather than with the household as a whole, but wife-takers have important servicing roles during ceremonial occasions, particularly death and also in economic sphere. One might ask whether it has symbolic significance implying continuation of the relationship in the after-world or sundering the relationship, so far as the dead person is concerned, with his death. Some of the dirges which Kamkhenthang has recorded, suggest the latter. Perhaps comparative data in respect of other tribes of the same ethno-cultural formation will throw more light on this.

—B.K. ROY BURMAN

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Historical Background

* The Paite belong to the Northern Chin sub-group of Kuki-Chin (Grierson 1967: 59) locally known as Zoumi. The Chin people or the Zoumi literally meaning people of the hills, concentrate in the Chin State of Burma, Mizoram and Manipur in the main. According to the local traditions, the Chin people originated from a pit somewhere in central China. The Burmans are also supposed to have migrated from Western China to the headwaters of the Irrawadi as the Tibetans did (Clewell 1949: 194). * The Burmese language is monosyllabic and it lacks 'r'—sound as in Paite or Tedim Chin (Henderson 1965). The absence of 'r'—sound in the speeches of Paite, Thadou, Vaiphei and Zou tribes is a peculiar character that distinguishes them from other cognate tribes of Chin-Kuki-Mizo group (Zoumi) who also linguistically belong to the Kuki-Chin sub-group of Tibeto-Burman family. The cave or pit mentioned above is called *khuul* in Paite and it means literally a grave or a hole. It means the same thing as the Lushai and Hmar versions of *Chhinlung* and *sinlung* respectively. A small tribe known as Kom is in Manipur. This vocable, Kom, also means a pit in the Meitei language (Teba 1972: 1). * The Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes claimed as a whole, their origin from a cave or pit and before their present tribal identities were established they claimed to have ever lived somewhere in modern China. The present Chin State of Burma

is considered to be the land where the present ethnic identities of most of these tribes seem to have crystallized. The Paite speaking people under the Gwite and the Sukte clans of the Paite claim their historical origin from Chimnuai, the Tahson or the Shunkla claim their origin from a rock at Shunkla, all in the present Chin State of Burma. The Hualngou and the Lushei also claimed that they originally sprang from the rocks at Seipui in Burma. Hence the name Lushai from Lusei which was derived from Seipui (Cf. McCall 1949: 19-20).

According to the myths these Chin people left China and moved southwards into Tibet. It is further said by Mr. Ngul Kho Pau (1970: 5) that the Chin people migrated southward as their population increased. He maintained that owing to exhaustion of land and natural resources migration took place from the vicinity of the cave in China towards Tibet. Owing to a fear complex as a consequence of internecine tribal wars and famines they moved away from Tibet and reached south. Some of them reached as far as Thailand. In the waves of migration from Tibet the Chin ancestors are stated to be the last migrants after the Shans and Karens. The Shans and Mons were already in Burma before the Chins. It is said that the Chin ancestors were the elder brothers of the Kachin People. In the course of their migration from Tibet the ancestors of the Chins moved away followed by the Kachins in quick succession. Along their path of migration the Chin cut banana stems. The cut ends of the plants threw new shoots quickly. The Kachins who followed the Chins saw the cut ends of banana stumps bearing long shoots. They deduced from these that their 'elder brothers' were quite ahead of them and hence they had a little hope and velleity to overtake them. Then they settled in a place where they are now, i.e. in the present Kachin State to the north-east of the Chin State of Burma. The Chins moved farther south in their pre-Chin stage and settled in the valley of the Irrawady in close contact with the Shans and Burmans. But their relationship with the Shans and Burmans was not cordial. Owing to oppressions by the Shans and Burman, the Chins migrated again northwards into the present Chin State of

Burma and consequently some of them proceeded to the north and north-east as far as India (Kamkhenthang 1975). The oral tradition of the mythological origin of the Chin people from a cave in Chins and their subsequent movements are dim vistas of myth. It is based on legendary stories of pre-Chin stage. We cannot be sure as to when the ancestors of the Chin left China and Tibet to enter Burma from what the legendary stories reveal. These groups of people did not certainly come as distinct socio-cultural units though historical linguistics, archaeology, and racial studies definitely indicate that the ancestors of these ethno-cultural groups did, indeed, come from the north. They cannot be identified with any particular group as we know them today (Cf. Lehman 1963: 11).

Origin of the Word Chin

There are different versions as to the origin of the word Chin. According to one version the term, Chin is a Burmese word derived from *khyang*. It means a basket in Burmese. It is derived from the old Burmese word *khyan*, meaning ally or comrade (Lehman 1963: 5). It is also supposed by some scholars that the word Chin came from a Burmese word *tagechin* which means 'dear friend'. It is a word signifying the friendliness of the Chin people to the Burmans (Siang Lian 1973). It is said that there is no single word Chin in the language of the Chin tribes. But a poetical expression for elder sibling is Chin (*cin*) in Paite language. Even if this has some bearing in some way, the people themselves popularly do not use the word Chin to mean a conger of their cognates. The Chin people themselves do not recognise the name Chin but call themselves Yo or Zo (Zou) in the north, Lai in the centre and Sho in the south, besides many other tribal names (Grierson 1967: 55). These words are used as synonyms for the term, Chin by the speakers. According to another version the word, Chin is said to be derived from the Chinese word *jen*, meaning 'man'. The Chins in Burma call the Chinese *Sen* as the Burmese call them *jen*. Mr. Ngul Kho Pau (1970: 5-6) further said that the Shans and Mons asked the ancestors of the Chin about their identity when they first met. They

answered that they were *jens* which the Shans and the Mons pronounced as Chin. It is also said (Grierson 1967: 55) that the term *jen* is used by the Burmese to denote all the hill tribes and is equally applied to the Kachin.

The Term Kuki

The term 'Kuki' is also given by outsiders to the group of Chin in India who migrated more northwardly and earlier than the Paite. The term has no meaning locally. The earlier groups of immigrants from Mizoram and Chin State to Assam and Manipur were known as Old Kukis. The term Old Kuki included Rangkhoh and Biete (clans of Hmar tribe) with their offshoots (Davis 1894). Das (1945: 19) included Aimol, Kolhen, Anal, Kom, Lamgang, Purum, Tikhup, Vaiphei and Hmar of Manipur and Hrangkhoh and Biete clans of Hmar in Cachar under Old Kuki. According to Davis the Old Kukis were pressed forward by the Thadou and Changsen from the present Mizoram into Cachar district of Assam where they were labelled as Kuki, a term quite unknown to them at first. In turn the Thadou, particularly the clans of Singson and Changsan were pushed out of Mizoram by the Lushais under the great Sailo chief, Lallula who established political supremacy in the northern Mizoram in 1810 (cf. McCall 1949: 35). About the same time the first chief of Sukte clan of the Paite named Khan Thuam and the Gwite chiefs drove the Thadou out of the Chinland into Manipur, except six Thadou villages (cf. Grierson 1967: 59). The appearance of the Thadou in Manipur and Assam made the earlier immigrants of the same ethnic origin bear the term 'Old Kuki'. Then the Thadou bore the term New Kuki to distinguish themselves from the former groups of immigrants. These terms give the chronology of migration of the Chin people into India upto the period of migration of the Thadou in the 18th and first part of 19th centuries.

Lehman (1963: 25) said that the expansion of tribal realms in the Palam-Haka area of the Chin State, strengthened, subsequently by renewed connections with Burmans who fought against Manipur, pushed the ancestral Lushai further into

Assam (Mizoram) in pre-Mizo stage. The New Kuki (Thadou) were pushed out of the Chin-Lushai country by their relatives in the 1700's and 1800's before the Thadou were identified as Kuki. This is the pre-Kuki stage of the Thadou. The population explosion, sometimes in the sixteenth century in the northern Chin State, might have been the cause of exodus of the so-called Old Kukis of Manipur and Assam. The first mention of the Old Kuki was as early as 1554 in the Manipur Chronicles (Shakespeare 1909: 373, cf. Dalton 1973: 44). These two dates of population explosion in the Northern Chin and the early mention of 'Kuki' coincide. Now it is clear that the Old Kukis came to Manipur in the 16th century and the Thadou (New Kuki) in the later part of 18th and the early part of 19th centuries. The Paite who came to Manipur only in the later part of the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries are too late chronologically to be included even in the New Kuki group. For example, Lungchin (the village of my study) was established as recently as 1910. The Zou tribe reached Manipur earlier than the Paite but later than the Thadou. The Zou were pushed northwardly, as a matter of avenger, by the Falam Chin after the Zou under Manlun clan attacked Phuaizang village of the Paite near Tedim.

'Kuki' is a rejected term of nomenclature as it is not acceptable to the people themselves. Zou, Hmar and Paite were too late to arrive in the region to accept and to be included under the terms either Old Kuki or New Kuki although all these three also belong to the same ethnic group. The New Kuki includes a single tribe called Thadou who are found in Cachar, Nagaland and Manipur (Das 1945: 19). Of the 21 clans of Hmar tribe (Pudait 1963: 32) only two clans were included in the Old Kuki group in the anthropological literature. Other clans of the Hmar do not accept the term. They are more prone to accept Mizo than Kuki. Kuki is a vague term. The tribes who are supposed to be Kuki never call themselves by that name. They regard it as a name contemptuously used by the plainsmen (Barkataki 1964: 71). Many so-called Kuki tribes in Manipur rather resent to be labelled as Kuki. The non-Thadou groups think that it is a term appropriate for the Thadou for their identification in

relation to outside world. However, consistency in the use of the term Kuki is also not maintained among the Thadou themselves. The Thadou prefer to be known at different levels either as Thadou or Kuki. At political level the Thadou are Kuki. The All India Radio has Thadou programme at Imphal and Kuki programme at Kohima station in Thadou language. The so-called Kuki rebellion of 1917-19 was known to the Paite as *Zougaal*, a war waged by the Zou tribe. Gautam (1973: 14) hesitated to call this insurgence as Kuki rebellion as he found it to be fought by the Thadou only. He is inclined to call it 'Thadou Rebellion' instead of calling it a Kuki one as it is not known outside that the Zou also fought for it in collusion with the Thadou. It may, however, be noted that the Thadou and the Zou are cognate ethnic units stemming from the Chin group.

The Thadou initially accepted the nomenclature 'Kuki' for their ethnic identification. They, however, wanted to include other Chin tribes who came to Manipur after them in the fold of Kuki. At the same time the Thadou held an ambivalent attitude towards the Paite while inviting them to join them. Several meetings of the Non-Naga or Chin tribes of Manipur had been called in the name of and by the Kuki National Assembly in 1940's. But there had never been a consensus over the term 'Kuki' as the Paite and other tribes could not accept it at all. The meetings ended in a fiasco instead of linking up the hill people of Manipur. The Thadou group regarded themselves as 'Kuki proper' as the term was first applied to them as 'New Kuki' and the Paite an 'Pseudo-Kuki' or 'Half-Kuki' as they are late comers in Manipur. Besides these, many other controversies like language, its foreign origin and its meaninglessness and absurdity in local view repelled the Paite from identifying themselves as Kuki. To be included within the Kuki group would mean to the Paite, absorption of the group into Thadou and loss of identity. As such a *Khuul* union was formed as a political front embracing the Chin tribes of Manipur who did not like to be merged with the Kuki. This *khuul* recalls the mythological cave or hole in China mentioned earlier.

Probable Origin of the Term Paite

Paite is the tribal name of the people under study on the Indian side of the Indo-Burma border. The meaning of the term is currently interpreted to denote their migratory habit. It means people on the move (cf. Goswami and Kamkhen-thang 1972: 22; Roy 1973: 190). The term 'Tedim Chin' came in vogue sometimes after the Pan Britanica of 1892. The term Paite and originally Paithe, in Lushai version, was given by the Hualngo and Lushai people with a slantingly degradatory sense to designate this Tedim Chin people as they apply the term Pawi to the Haks and Falam Chins. Lushai people were in the habit of giving names to ethno-cultural groups according to their choice. The term was used to include all the Paite (non-'r' group) speaking population living between the Lushai and Falam Chins. Grierson (1967: 82) wrote the probable origin of the term Paite in this way:

The Lushais called all the hill tribes who wear their hair in a knot upon the top of the head Poi or Pai. Most of the central and southern Chin tribes tie their hair up in this way. A thousand individuals in the north Lushai Hills (Mizoram) have been returned as speaking Paite. This word is simply the plural of Pai or Poi mentioned above, and Paite should accordingly be supposed to be a central Chin dialect.

Grierson adds that the Zahau and Wheno (Hualngo) at one time were also known as Poite and Paite. He goes on to say that "They include the two powerful communities of Zahau and Wheno which were formerly known as Pois, Poite and Paite" (Grierson: 107). The Punjabis of India are also denoted by the Lushai as 'Vai Pawi' meaning Indian Pawi because of the hair knot on the top of the head like the southern Chins of Burma (Barkatoki 1969: 109) whom the Burmans call *Baungshe* for the same reason. The term Lakher was also a Lushai version for the people who call themselves Mara (Parry 1932:1). Lakher means 'spinning cotton' in Lushai language.

For a long time the term Paite was not popularly accepted internally as a group identity in India by the people themselves, except in Lushai area. Till the attainment of Indian Independence and separation of Burma from India the people opted

to be known by the clan names of their political overlords within their local groups (Goswami and Kamkhenthang 1975: 22). The different clans of the Paite under the Gwite chieftainship were invariably known as Vuite (Lushai version for Gwite) or Gwite or Paite (Cf. Shakespear 1912: 142) and Sukte. Similarly members of the same clans and any other clans of the identical ethnic origin under the Sukte chiefs were also referred to as Sukte after the name of the clan of their political overlord in Burma. Paite (pronounced as Paihte) is a term used in India whereas Tedim Chin is the term used in Burma for the same people after Independence from the British. * The same people happens to be known by two different names in two countries now. A member of a group is Paite so long as he or she is within the Indian territory and he or she is again Tedim Chin as soon as he or she is in Burma. In short Paite implies Indian citizenship and Tedim Chin implies Burmese citizenship. The term Paite or Paihte is not acceptable popularly in Burma as the term Tedim Chin is also not popularly acceptable in Indian side by the people for whom it was meant. As the name Paihte was given by the R-group of Chin (people like Lushai, Hualngo, Pawi) the term was initially accepted by the Paite in Lushai areas only. It takes time to get acceptance in areas outside Lushai influence. * In Manipur also the term Paite did not get popular acceptance among the Paites themselves initially while they were identifying themselves with the clan of their political overlords. Similarly the term Chin became more popular in areas of Burmese influence. * Hence Tedim Chin in Burma and Paite in India cropped up as names of the same community. Even personal name of a ruling chief happened to be used as group identity, e.g., people under Kamhau the great, the Sukte chief were generally identified as Kamhau who began to rule c. 1848 (See Grierson 1967: 72). Woodthorpe (1873: 71) showed the interchangeability of the terms Paite and Sukte during the course of Lushai expedition in 1871-72. He wrote, "The Lushai with whom we became acquainted during our journeys, belonged to three different tribes, the Lushais, Paitēs or Sokte (Sukte) and Pois." Sukte and Gwite were synonymous for Paite or Tedim Chin. * Now

Paite and Tedim Chin are synonymous. The ruling clans before the British came were the Sukte and the Gwite. These two chiefly clans of the Paite were affines. The Gwite were the wife-givers and the Sukte were the wife-takers. The Gwite ruled in area north of the Sukte and the Sukte ruled in area south of the Gwite. Relation of the Paite with the Meitei was historically bitter and hostile till a group of Paite came to settle in Manipur in 1870 under the leadership of Sumkam, the Gwite Chief (Shakespear 1912: 143). They often attacked Manipuri villages. "The tribe had remained comparatively quiet with little of the aggressiveness which they had shown... in January 1883" (Singh 1969: 173). * There are confusions after confusions as to the identity of this people. Grierson himself treated the groups under Sukte and Paite as separate and different people and could not get linguistic samples for Sukte while he got for Paite. Again he could not estimate the probable population of the Paite while he could do so for the Sukte. The same confusion may occur and continue when one hears Paite and Tedim Chin. * Throughout the book I am using the term Paite freely to mean both the Paite of India and the Tedim Chin of India who are living in the Indo-Burma border areas.

* Though the term Paite had been in use since a long time, as mentioned above, it has been officially accepted in record by the people themselves in Manipur only in 1948 with the formation of the Paite National Council. The official adoption of the name and its organisation was necessitated by a heavy pressure to include the Paite people under either Kuki or Lushai (Mizo) in India. This organisation has been a political organ of the Paite since then. It had briskly pressed the Governments of Assam and India to recognise Paite as a scheduled tribe of India and its inclusion in the Scheduled list of the constitution of India (Kamkhenthang: 1975) to get the benefits in their own right of the safeguards provided in the constitution (Bose 1968). * The Government of India have since (1956) included the Paite as one of the Scheduled tribes of the country.

Affiliation of a tribe to a sub-nation within a nation is a matter of group choice under conditions of local politics.

The Paite as a whole can either be Mizo or Chin or Kuki according to the group feeling and group interactions. Some of the Paite now in Mizoram and Mizo just as they are Chin in Chin State of Burma. The Paite of Burma think that they are neither Mizo nor Kuki. The Paite of Manipur do not like to be labelled as Kuki partly because there is no Paite speaker in the Kuki group and for some other reasons as mentioned above. *The Paite feel that the Thadou are Kuki proper. They also feel that they are not politically Mizo under different political umbrella, though the literal meaning of the term 'Mizo' is applicable to them ethnologically and topologically. According to Paite attitude any Lushai speaker is a Lushai. The Mizo or Lushai speakers do not count at personal level or more at political level the language of Hmar and Paite, except their own Lushai language as the Mizo language. This have a repulsive effect on the Paite and Hmar of Manipur. *The Paite are more inclined to be identified with their cognates, the Tedim Chin, than with Mizo or Kuki. They prefer a generic term Zoumi as a group identity of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes either to the term Chin or Kuki or Mizo. This inclination is based on linguistic oneness and kinship based on clanship apart from socio-cultural affinities. *The position of the Paite in Chin-Kuki Mizo world is of the nature described above. Variation in territorial and local political affiliations keep the different tribes under the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group further and further apart while acknowledging their ethnicity and linguistic affinity.

Zoumi

The so-called Chin-Kuki-Mizo people do not have a common generic name by which they may be identified as the Nagas do by a single generic name. As stated earlier, it is a matter of popular acceptance to be either Chin or Kuki or Mizo or even Zoumi. Uptil now all the people under the great name of Chin-Kuki-Mizo do not like to be termed uniformly as either Chin or Kuki or Mizo. Loyalty is divided into Chin, Kuki and Mizo. As such Chin is more or less retained and used in Burma, Mizo in Mizoram. Kuki has been putting

to various tests for acceptance without success in Manipur. The Thadou and speakers of Thadou are accepting the term Kuki in Manipur. None of the terms like Chin, Mizo and Kuki binds the people together as the term Naga can bind all the members and tribes of the Naga. As a result of it, the communities under the Chin-Kuki group feel the need of having a commonly accepted nomenclature. Various associations like student body, social groups, religious bodies etc. feel the inconveniences of not having a commonly accepted nomenclature for them by which they can be identified them collectively while retaining their tribal identities. They are grouping for a common name. We have earlier discussed that the terms like Chin, Kuki are at the threshold of rejection. These terms were not born within but were imposed on the people by outsiders. Hence they are not acceptable for their group identities. Mizo is also now taken to mean the Lushai speakers in the Paite point of view to which the Paite of India and of Burma do not subscribe the term Mizo for their generic name. As a result of non-accepting the generic terms like Kuki, Chin and Mizo, a dormant term which remained buried in the socio-cultural milieu is gaining momentum among the Paite of India and of Burma as well as among the cognate tribes like Vaiphei, Zou, Gangte etc. as their collective identity. *However, the tribes belonging to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group know that they belong to the same stock of people. The only problem is that there is not a single term commonly accepted for their nomenclature. Hence a poet sung that they belong to one set of people as in the following couplet:

*Ei teng khawkhawm a tuam, omlou,
Vannuai chiteng khuul a piang;
Tuunsung khat a piang hi ngeingei,
Tuunsung khat a piang hi ngeingei,
Suahpith sanggam,
Laizom khat hi ngeingei hang e.*

[We, people who are in aggregation are of one stock,
Every one of us under the sun is born of a cave (khuul);
And born of the same mother.

Being born of the same mother,
We are all born together as siblings;
We are really descendants of the same siblings].

Theme of the Book

The theme of this book is social structure of the Paite. Household council, called hereinafter, *inndongta*, has been selected for the topic of discussion in order to have a full view of the Paite social structure. In order to understand the social structure of Paite community it is a *sine qua non* to know the working system of the corporate *inndongta* institution. All activities of Paite socio-cultural life hinge on the *inndongta*. It is the hub of Paite social structure. All activities operate through and revolve around the *inndongta*. For understanding of a social structure, anthropologists select models of either descent or filiation as the focal point of their studies. They delve deep into the marriage or clan system and lucubrate the materials to fit into the social structure by putting the parts together. Paite society is unique and distinct from the majority of the anthropologically known societies in *ha ving aga mous* marriage. Descent alone does not give full understanding of the social structure. Affinity alone also cannot give full view of the Paite social structure. Each two types of anthropologists—descent theory anthropologists (Fortes, Gluckman, Goody) and alliance theory anthropologists (Levi-Strauss, Leech, Needham) advocate their theories to determine social structural system. The descent group and alliance group together with residential groupings work together through the mechanism of *inndongta*. It is for this reason I choose the corporate *inndongta* for the focal point in order to understand the social structure of the Paite of the Indo-Burma border areas. *Inndongta* is a by-product of descent, and affinal relations backed and hemmed in by local group members of a village. All the recognizable categories of persons in relationship of a man are represented in the *inndongta*. There are representatives of one's descent group, affines, matrilineal kin and outsiders. Traditional values and norms attached to the *inndongta* have been still strongly operating as motivating factors responsible for arranging activities from birth through marriage to death among them living in a village as well as in big cities like Rangoon and Imphal.

It has been observed that a household is an economic

and social unit. A household is a universal unit. So is the *inndongta* in Paite society. The household and its *inndongta* always associate each other and an object has its shadow. Under the ecological environments the Paite live in the Indo-Burma border areas, a Burmese type of *taungya* cultivation is the sole means of livelihood in the hilly terrains. A household is treated individually as an economic unit. It is such a unit of a household to which a right to exploit a forest area for jhuming is given (Cf. Goswami & Kamkhenthang 1974: 3). Different families living in the same household, under the same roof and sharing the same hearth and a barn are not given different and individual rights of jhuming area. All members of the same household farm on the same plot of jhuming land. A household is primarily responsible for managing its affairs and agricultural pursuit. The mode of livelihood is an exercise between the ecological environment on the one hand and the human beings on the other. Households having better equipment have better adaptation to the environmental pressure. This process in quest of food is an arduous one. Procurement of sufficient food and sound health are not always assured in this uncertain world. Difficulties and uncertainties loom large for a household. The *inndongta* is multi-faceted. It is the projections of social, economic and cultural aspects of the people in response to the needs of the community. The environment, if not exploited, will not by itself come to the relief of the needy people. On the other hand, all the Paite villages in the Indo-Burma border areas are marked by the absence of wage labour. It is the members of the kin group or the village who alone can come to the rescue of the needy households in respect of supplying the extra labour that is demanded during the peak period of jhuming cycle and during various civil and ritual occasions. To get necessary assistance from different sets of relatives each household arranges to tag in several households and get them affiliated to it in a corporate *inndongta* organisation. Households assume certain responsibilities towards one another to back up one another. So each household has this *inndongta* organisation consisting of several households at its back. The same household may be affiliated to several

households on different capacities to exchange help, meat and drink. The position, a household shall hold in the *inndongta*, is structurally determined by kinship position. How we shall pass on to the formation of the *inndongta* and other complicacies in order to see the structural arrangement of persons in the kinship universe.