

**ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF
THADOU BAPTIST ASSOCIATION**

Paominlen Kipgen (PK)

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INTRODUCTION

0.1 Research Title:

Origin and Development of Thadou Baptist Association: A Historical Evaluatory Study.

0.2 Statement of the Problem:

The Thadou Baptist Association (TBA) was formed with a vision to unite and develop all the Thadou Churches to a closer fellowship and service and to help the rural people in socio-

economic life development. But due to socio-political, economic, tribal identities, and denominational issues, the Association is not able to achieve its goal.

0.3 Elaboration of the Problem:

The Thadou are a group of people found in Manipur, Assam, Nagaland and Mizoram states of India, and in Chin state and Sagaing Division of Myanmar. In Manipur, they are mostly found in South-Western Hills and Sadar Hills, Churachandpur District, Chandel District, Ukhrul District, Tamenglon District and Jiribam. They were recognized as a tribe by the President Notification under Article No. 342 of the Indian Constitution.¹ According to 2011 census, the total Thadou population in Manipur was 2,15,913.²

Christianity in Northern part of Manipur was brought in by the Arthington Aborigines Mission (AAM). Later the AAM handed over their mission to American Baptist Mission (ABM) in the year 1896. William Pettigrew was the pioneer missionary in Northern Manipur. In the Southern part Christianity was brought in by an Independent Welsh Mission called the Thado Kuki Pioneer Mission through Watkin R. Roberts.

Through the missionary work of the ABM the Kuki Baptist Association (KBA) was established at South Changoubung in 1950 and its office was situated at Motbung village. Kuki Baptist Association (KBA) was later renamed as Thadou Baptist Association (TBA) and it came to be firmly founded on September 30, 1971.³

¹ List Order Notification No. SRO. 2477-A. Ministry of Law & Home Affairs, Govt. of India dated 29th October, 1956 at New Delhi in respect of the State of Manipur. www.tribal.nic.in/.../file/4%20-%20Order%2029%20oct%201956.pdf

² <http://manipur-talks.com/index.php?threads/scheduled-tribes-population-of-manipur-as-per-2011-census.7240/>. Accessed on 14-1-2016. Against 1,82,594 in 2011. www.censusindia.gov.in/Tables-Published/SCST/dh_st_manipur.pdf

³ Thangkholet Kipgen, *A Brief History of the Thadou Baptist Association*, 2, quoted in Elungkiebe Zeliang, *A History of The Manipur Baptist Convention* (Imphal: Manipur Baptist Convention, 2005), 199.

Thadou Baptist Association was formed to mobilize the rural Churches, fulfil the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ by sending missionaries and evangelists to the unreached people; to unite all the Thadou Churches for closer fellowship and services; to help the rural people in socio-economic life development; and to have fellowship and partnership with the other Christian organizations within the country and abroad. Presently TBA has 50 Churches and is a registered body under the Government of India Regd. No. 135 of 1988 Under Societies Registration Act. XXI of 1860. However, studying its 44 years of historical journey reveals that it fails to achieve its aim.

Though the Thadous are the second largest community in Manipur preceded only by the Meiteis or Manipuris, the Thadou Baptist Association is the least developed Association in Manipur. And till today the number and member of Churches do not grow much as it was intended and expected to be. It has a less number of workers, missionaries and evangelist with a less pay in comparison with the other Association. They neither have partnership with any other Christian organisations nor were they self sufficient. The little contributions they made towards the development of the community were not recognized.⁴

0.4 Research Question:

- I. Who are the people Thadou?
- II. Why was the Thadou Baptist Association established?
- III. What contributions did TBA made for the community so far?
- IV. What hinders the development of TBA?

0.5 Aims and Objectives:

⁴ This is a researcher's evaluation since he has been working in TBA for more than 12 years and he is familiar with all the Association's activities in comparison with the other Associations.

- I. To study on the origin and background of the Thadou Society.
- II. To have a comprehensive study on the emergence of TBA and find out the reason behind its existence.
- III. To bring into light contribution of TBA towards the development of Thadou Community.
- IV. To critically study and evaluate about the hindrances towards its development.

0.6 Scope and Limitation:

Though TBA Churches are in Assam and Myanmar, this research will be limited to the historical developments of the Thadou Baptist Association in Manipur, India. The research will also be further limited to the materials available and collected. The researcher will study the background of the Thadou community and the church as a whole; but the main focus will be from the inception (1950) till 2016. Moreover, the research will focus on the activities of various departments of TBA and describe how they were established and how they grow.

Previous Research:

There are few researches already done regarding the origin of Christianity in Manipur. K.M. Singh in his book *History of the Christian Mission in Manipur and Other Neighbouring States* wrote the History of Christianity in Manipur in a non-Christian perspective. He mainly deals about the education programme promoted by the missionaries, and how the preaching of gospel is being prohibited in the state of Manipur, especially in the plain areas. Instead of writing the progress of Christianity, his main focus is on the controversy between the Missionaries and their allotted areas, and how the Maharaja of Manipur and the British rule over the missionaries. He wrote nothing about the origin and formation of denomination.

The Legacy of Watkin R. Roberts by Jonathan Pudaite gives details about the advent and progress of the churches in southwest Manipur. Pudaite mainly deals on the story of Watkin Roberts, his life, career, his activities in southwest Manipur, India, and abroad. He also gives background information on the context in which Roberts started his interdenominational faith mission. The book is limited to the period from 1910-1947. He ignored the work of American Baptist Mission, and the establishment of churches in Northern part of Manipur among the Nagas and the Kukis.

KBC Thusim (History of the Kuki Baptist Convention) and *KBC Thuchin Bu (KBC Diary)* published by Kuki Baptist Convention discussed on the history of the origin and development of KBC and mention a brief history of the origin of TBA in their own perspective. They recorded TBA as a faction denomination from KBC, originated by some clan from among the Thadou tribe, and misinterpreted Thadou. Their approach were bias when the reality is considered.

Rev. Vumthang Sitlhou in his book *Thadou-Kuki Christianite Thusim Chomcha (1908-2008)* [Brief History of the Thadou-Kuki Christians] also mentions about the origin of different denomination in Manipur including TBA. But, since his focus is on the formation of churches as a whole, many important information regarding the origin and development of TBA is omitted.

As far as the researcher's knowledge, no research has been done so far regarding the development of TBA and its contribution towards the Community.

0.7 Methodology:

The methodology of this thesis will be as per the guidelines of the *Church History Association of India*, focusing upon the socio-cultural history of the Thadou, especially as to

how they expressed and understood themselves. The researcher will follow the Historical Descriptive Method of research, describing the social, cultural, political and religious background of the Thadous Baptist Association, the historical development, and evaluate its development and contributions.

Throughout the process of research, the researcher will be using the available resources such as minutes and resolution of KBA/TBA, Books, Journals, Magazine, Articles, Paper presentations both in English and Thadou as primary sources. Personal interviews to the Staff and ex-officio members of TBA and Internet sources will also be used as secondary sources to analyse and narrate the comprehensive history of TBA.

CHAPTER – 1

SOCIO-CULTURAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE THADOUS

Out of the thirty four tribes that settled in Manipur, the Thadous are the largest and one of the oldest tribe. There were two Thadous in history. The first Thadou on which the researcher did

his research is the nation Thadou that existed six century before Christ. The second Thadou is a name of a person, the ancestor of the Thadou clans such as Haokip, Kigen, Sitlhou, Singsit, Singson etc., whose period was around 1000 AD. Presently the Thadous are scattered in most of the north-eastern state of India, parts of Burma and in Bangladesh, and these three contiguous independent countries became the land of their permanent home. However, the largest number of them is concentrated in Manipur. This chapter will be dealing on the origin and migration, socio-culture life, political administration and religious background of the first Thadous in general and the Thadous that settle in Manipur in particular.

1.1 MANIPUR AT A GLANCE

The word Manipur literally means “the city or the land of gems.” It borders Myanmar to its East and South East. Therefore, it is called gateway of India to South-east Asia. In the North lies Nagaland, Assam in the West, and Mizoram in the South-West. The name Manipur was first officially introduced in the early eighteenth century during the reign of Hinduized Garibaniwas (1709-48).⁵

1.1.1 Political Background

Manipur has a history of nearly two thousand years. It was previously an independent kingly State until it came under the British rule in 1817. After Independence, Maharaja Bodhchandra signed the Merger agreement on September 21, 1949 and the Manipur State officially merged with the Government of India on October 15, 1949. Manipur existed as a part “C” State in

⁵ Gangmumei Kabui, “Glimpses of Land the People of Ancient Manipur,” *Manipur Past and Present: the Heritage and Ordeals of a Civilization, vol. 1*, edited by Naorem Sanajaoba (Delhi: Mittal Publication, 1988), 3.

1952 and then became Union Territory in 1957, and finally became full-fledged Statehood on January, 21, 1972.⁶ Manipuri language was recognized as a national language in 1992.⁷

1.1.2 Geographical Feature

Manipur lies in between 23.50° to 25.41° North Latitudes, and 93.2° to 94.47° East Latitudes. It has a geographical area of 22,326 sq. Km; 859 km of border line, out of which 505 km are interstate boundaries and 345 km international boundaries.⁸ It has four major river basins.⁹ The land of Manipur can be classified into two categories, namely, the hills and the valley. The Manipur hills cover an area of 92%¹⁰ with an average elevation between 5000 to 6000 feet above sea level.¹¹ The valley, called Imphal Valley measures about 60 by 30 Kms (1800 sq km)¹² and it lies at an altitude of 2,600 feet above sea level.¹³

1.1.3 Weather Condition

Manipur enjoys a sub-tropical monsoon climate. The climatic condition varies according to the geographical structure. The hill areas have colder climate in comparison to the valley. January is the coldest month where the temperature drops to between 11.8°C and 19.4°C. July is the hottest month and the temperature range between 25.1°C and 31.1°C. Rainfall is

⁶ Rajkumar Snahal, "Post-Merger Political History of Manipur," *Manipur Past and Present: The Heritage and ordeals of a Civilization, Vol 1*, edited by Naorem Sanajaoba (Delhi: Mittal Publication, 1988), 175-92, cf. R.R. Lolly, *The Baptist Church in Manipur* (Imphal: Mrs. R. Khathingla Lolly, 1985), 2.

⁷ Jatra Singh, *Encyclopaedia of Manipur Vol. 1*. (New Delhi: Anmol Publication Pvt. Ltd. 2010), vii.

⁸ Elungkiebe Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention Baptist Convention* (Imphal: Manipur Baptist Convention, 2005), 5.

⁹ The Barak River Basin (Barak Valley) to the west, the Manipur River Basin in central Manipur, the Yu River Basin in the east, and a portion of the Lanye River Basin in the north. Ngamthang Haokip, "Basine Delineation Map of Manipur" *Profile on State of Environment Report of Manipur, 2006-07* (Ministry of Environment and Forests, Manipur, 2007), 4

¹⁰ Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 5.

¹¹ Lolly, *The Baptist Church in Manipur...*, 3.

¹² Ravindra Pratap Singh, *Geography of Manipur* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1982), 20-21.

¹³ Lolly, *The Baptist Church in Manipur...*, 3.

relatively abundant and widespread in the state.¹⁴ It varies from 100 cms to 175 cms at different location in the State.¹⁵

1.1.4 Peoples of Manipur

The original inhabitants of Manipur were the Kiratas.¹⁶ The present inhabitants of Manipur may be broadly classified on the basis of their geographical settlements such as the valley people (*Tam mi*) and the hills people (*ching mi*). The valley people are predominantly Meitei or Manipuri. The hills people may be further divided into two groups namely the Kukis and the Nagas.¹⁷

1.1.4.1 The Meitei

The Meitei, also commonly known as Manipuris are the dominant ethnic group of Manipur. There are various theory on the origin of Meiteis. Some believe that Manipuris are a fine stalwart race descended from an Indo-Chinese stock, with some admixture of Aryan blood. Some scholars consider that the Manipuris are Indo-aryan Kshatriyas as mentioned in the epic, *Mahabharatha*.¹⁸ According to Gangmumei, “the Meitei are Tibeto-Burman Mongoloid with Austroloid, Aryan and Thai admixture (including some Negrito and Dravidian elements).”¹⁹ Grierson tries to seek the relationship of the *Meitei* language and the language spoken by the hill tribes in the state and suggested that “Meitei language falls into the Tibeto-Burman group”²⁰ S K. Chatterjee believes that, “Meitei of Manipur are the most advanced section of the Kuki-Chin people”. According to him, the Meitei are known as Kukis in India

¹⁴ Pratap Singh, *Geography of Manipur...*, 20-21.

¹⁵ Lolly, *The Baptist Church in Manipur...*, 4.

¹⁶ Kiratas were some tribes of Nagas. Leirenmayum Iboonghal Singh, *Introduction to Manipur* (Imphal: S. Ibochaoba Singh, 1987), 10.

¹⁷ Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 5.

¹⁸ Ashim Kumar Singha, *Manipuri History* (Manipuri Web Portal:<http://manipuri.org/index.php/history>), accessed on 28-1-2016, 2.

¹⁹ Kabui, “Glimpses of Land and People of Ancient Manipur...”, 3.

²⁰ G. A. Grierson, *Report on the Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. III, Pt. III (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1967), 6.

and Chins in Burma.”²¹ The sphere of *Meitei* identity was expanded to cover Brahmins and *Pangan/Pangal*²² (*Meitei* Muslims). Most of the descendents of Muslims in Manipur were the descendent of Bengali emigrant.²³

Previously the Meitei had their own indigenous religion. Singh writes,

Manipur preserved an ancient indigenous religion rich in mythology and colourful in ritual, known today as the *Sanamahi*²⁴. Early Manipuris were the devotees of a Supreme deity *Lainingthou Soralel* following the footprint of their Godly ancestors.²⁵

Apart from these, the Meiteis also worship different gods such as *Lamlai* (god of the country side) who control rain, *Umanglai* (god of the forest), *Imunglai* (the household deity, ancestor of each tribe), and also spirits of the mountain, lakes, river, vampires etc.²⁶

The Meitei adopted Hinduism as their state religion in early 18th century and synthesized with their traditional religion to form the Manipuri Hinduism.²⁷ However, the ritual practices of the old religion do not totally disappeared. *Maiba* and *Maibis*²⁸ are numerous and popular.

²¹ S. K. Chatterjee, *Kirata-Jana-Kriti: The Indo-Mongoloids and their Contribution to the History and Culture of India* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1974), 142.

²² The word Pangan is derive from a Bengali word *Bangan = Pangan*

²³ Singh, *Encyclopaedia of Manipur...*, 6. The first Muslim settlement in Manipur recorded in the chronicle was in the year 1606. The first batches of settlers in Manipur were war prisoners captured by King Khangemba. Janab Khan argues that there were Muslims in Manipur before the reign of this king. They married Manipuri women and adopted Manipuri as mother tongue and by 19th Century, their population reached 4881 in the census of 1881. Lal Dena, *History of Modern Manipur – 1826-1949* (New Delhi: Orbit Publishers – Distributors, 1991), 99.

²⁴ *Sanamani* worshiped is concentrated around Sidaba Mapu, the one God. The Manipuri copper plates dates Saka year 721 issued by King Khomtekcha, ruler of Manipur from 763 AD to 733 AD, mentioned worship of *Sanamahi*.

²⁵ Singh, *Encyclopaedia of Manipur...*, 6.

²⁶ T.C. Hodson, “Manipuris” *Encyclopedia of the Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), 402.

²⁷ In the first quarter of the eighteenth century during the reign of Maharajah Gharib Niwaz, the Vaishnava missionary, Shantidas Atnikary (Goswami) came to Manipur and converted the king to Hinduism. After his conversion to Hinduism, the king declared Vaishnavism as the State religion and advised his subjects to accept it. The king also burns all the Scriptures of the old religion of the Meitei. Thus Vaishnavism spread throughout the State under the royal patronage and the Meitei under compulsion of the Maharajah became Hindu Vaishnavas.²⁷ Since then, the Meitei retain their original clan system as well as adopt the Hindu system of *gotral*. After the conversion to Hinduism, Meitei society became a caste based society. But, there are only two castes in their society, viz., the Brahmins (*Bamon* in Manipuri) and Kshetriya (all the clan Meitei). There is one exterior caste, called *Lois*.

²⁸ Men and women who practices medicine along with witchcraft.

Further, various form of ancestor worship, traces of snake worship, witchcraft, taboo and vampires flourish, and animistic deities are worshipped no less than orthodox Hindu gods.

The most important festival of the Meitei Hindu Vaishnavas is the *Yaoshang* (Doljatra). Other Hindu festivals such as Durga Puja and Depawali are also observed. Some festivals of the old faith such as *Lai-Haraoba* and *Cheiraoba* are still observed along with other festival.²⁹ Presently, the Meitei are religiously classified as Hindus, Muslims, and Christians.

1.1.4.2 The Tribals

The Hills tribes, also called schedule tribes numbers 90,2740, which is 35.1% of the state population according to 2011 census.³⁰ Racially and linguistically the tribals belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of the southern Mongoloid race. The many hill tribes are broadly classified into two groups, the Kukis and the Nagas.

1.1.4.2.1 The Nagas

The origin of the term Naga is in dispute for there are many inconclusive theories.³¹ However, the common widely accepted is the definition given by Shimray in his book *Origin and Culture of the Nagas*. He writes, “The term ‘Naga’ was derived from the Burmese word *Na Ka* meaning ‘People with pierced ears.’”³² Piercing of ears was a wide practice among the Nagas till today and therefore this proposal seems closely fitted in general among the insiders.

²⁹ Lolly, *The Baptist Church in Manipur...*, 7-8.

³⁰ The proportion during the last Census was 34.2%. There has thus been an increase of 0.9% during the last decade. http://epao.net/epSubPageextractor.asp?sc=manipur.Census_of_Manipur.Manipur_Final_Population_of_date_of_Census_2011.

³¹ According to Robinson The word ‘Naga’ has been supposedly derived from the Sanskrit word *Nanga* which means ‘Naked’.” (William Robinson, *A Description According to Assam* (Guwahati: Guwahati Press, 1991), 21.) J.H. Hutton holds the view that, the word ‘Naga’ is a European lengthening of the Assamese *Noga* which means ‘naked’. (J.H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 5.) Many western writers accepted that the word originated from Assamese, Sanskrit or Hindustani ‘Naga’. Some hold the view that Naga comes from the Sanskrit word *Nagam* which means ‘Hill’. Nagas therefore, means ‘hill men’.

³² R.R. Shimray, *Origin and culture of the Nagas* (Delhi: Mital Publication, 1985), 41.

Unlike the Kukis, the Nagas did not have one origin in common. Their legend differed from one to another.³³ The Naga tribes of Manipur consist of Maram, Mao, Paumei, Puimei, Purum, Thangal, Tangkhul, and Zaliangrong (Zemei, Liangmei and Rongmei). Due to the influence in political ideology many old Kuki tribes like Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Koireng, Lamkang, Maring, Mayon, Monsang, etc. included themselves within the Naga fold. The Nagas mainly concentrated in Ukhrul District, Senapati District, Tamenglong and Chandel District. Some of them settled in the valley district like Imphal, and Bishnupur District.

1.1.4.2.2 The Kukis

All the non-Naga tribals in Manipur are collectively known as Kukis. Kuki is a name of a nation which owned many tribes like: Aimol, Anal, Baite, Chothe, Chongthu (Songthu), Chiru, Gangte, Hmar, Khongsai, Kom, Koireng, Koren, Lamkang, Lushei, Mayon, Mate, Monsang, Paite, Purum, Ralte, Simte, Sukte, Thadou, Thangkhal, Vaiphei, Zou, etc.³⁴

³³ In the case of Tangkhul, in the statement of Dr. Brown, “the origin of the Tangkhuls, as thus given by themselves say, they came out of the cave in the earth of a place called *Murringphy* in the hills, about four days journey north-east of the *Munnipore* valley.” T.C. Hudson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1974), 10). However Hudson further collected information that *Houbum Maruk* (*Hau* means Naga, *Bum* is the old form of adjective, and *Maruk* is identical with *maru*, which mean seed, i.e. ‘Source of origin’) was claimed by the Tangkhuls as the place of their origin. (T.C. Hudson, *The Naga Tribes...*, 16). The Mao legend points that their ancestors *Makel Tunggam* (name of a person who was believed to be the ancestor of the Mao tribe of Manipur) emerged from the earth, and referred to *Khezakhnoma* (name of a village somewhere in the Mao areas in the northern part of Manipur, where the Nagas have their legend to originate from here) as the origin of their migration. (Gangumei Kabui, “Genesis of the Ethnoses...”, 27). In regards to the Kabui tribe, the *Songboo* (a mountainous region situated towards the south of Thungching valley, located in the present west district of Manipur named, Tamenglong) tradition gives as the place of their origin, the mountains toward the south of the valley named *Thungching*. (T.C. Hudson, *The Naga Tribes...*, 14). The Marams tribe claimed themselves as the descendents of *Medungasi* and *Simoting*. (T.C. Hudson, *The Naga Tribes...*, 13). The Zeliangrong tribes on the other hand have the tradition that they came out of a mystical cave known as *Taobhei*. They migrated to *Makhel Longi*, and then dispersed towards three regions – the south, west and north. (Ganmumei Kabui, “Genesis of the Ethnoses...”, 27).

³⁴ Nehkholun Kipgen, *The Kukiland* (Imphal: Kuki National Front, 1997), 3. In Manipur, many westerners who wrote about Kuki divided into two: the old Kuki and the New Kuki. Old Kuki according to Shakespear are Aimol, Chothe, Chiru, Kom, Purum, Koireng, Anal, Lamkang, Maon, Monsang, Gangte, Vaiphei etc. (Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear, *The Lushai-Kuki Clans* (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1912 149.) The New Kuki are: Simte, Paite, Zou, Hmar and the Thadou. (KNF, *Kukiland...*, 15.) However, according to Shakespear the New Kukis are only the Thadous. (Shakespear, *The Lushai-Kuki Clans...*, 149.)

The word Kuki came from the words of the non-Kukis like English, Burmese, Chinese and Bengalis. Nehlun wrote “a child cannot compose his name himself but the parent. Like the same manner, our name of nation was composed by the older non-Kukis.”³⁵ Some spokesman and thinkers of Manipur have the opinion that the word Kuki was derived from the English word “Kuki or Kooky” which means ‘uncivilized tribes dressed like animals.’ When the British came to the lower part of Manipur they called the non-Naga tribes in Manipur Hill areas as Kuki which means nomadic, primitive, uncivilized, and draw-back people not wiser than animals, as a degrading term.³⁶ According to Gangmumei “the term Kuki is not known but likely to have been derived from Bengali word for ‘hill people’. The word was found to be first used in 1777 AD when they attacked the British subjects in Chittagong.”³⁷ The Kukis are generally called Chin³⁸ in Myanmar, Kukis and Mizos in India. Today most of the Kuki tribes wanted to be called by their individual name and thereby disown the term Kuki. Therefore, today many people applied the term Kuki only to the Thadou speaking group.³⁹

All the Kukis tribes were from one ancestor and trace their origin to *Khul/Sinlung/Chinlung*.⁴⁰ Though each Kuki tribe have a distinct dialect, yet there are many similarities in their dialect so they can communicate with each other speaking their own dialects. The Kukis inhabited all the hill districts of Manipur. They are mainly concentrated in Churachandpur District, Sadar Hills District, and Chandel District. Some of them are settled in the valley districts like Imphal, Thoubal and Bishnupur District.

³⁵ Nehlun *Kuki, Story of the Emblem* (Imphal : Kuki National Front, 1997), 2.

³⁶ L. Ngulxholun Khongsai, *The Kukis: Anthropological Studies of the Kukis* (Imphal: Author, 1994), 1-2.

³⁷ Gangmumei Kabui, “Genesis of the Ethnoses of Manipur” 34, quoted from *Zeliang, A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 12.

³⁸ The term *Chin* is said to be a Burmese corruption of the Chin “Jin” or “Yen” meaning “Man.”

³⁹ S. Prim Vaiphei, “The Kukis,” *Manipur Past and Present: The ordeals and Heritage of Civilization, Vol. III*, edited by Naorem Sanajaoba (New Delhi: Mittal Publication, 1995), 127-129.

⁴⁰ Will be discuss later in Chapter 1.2.2.2 Origin of the Thadou – Khul Theory.

1.2 THE THADOUS

The Thadous in Manipur are an important tribe living in a large area of hilly country bounded by the Angami Naga of the Naga Hills District in the North, the province of Myanmar in the east, the Chin Hills and Lushei Hills in the south, and the District of Cachar in the west.⁴¹ They have a distinctive language, custom and culture of their own. They are known by different names; *Lushongte* (Pride of head) by the Zous, *Khongjai* by the Meiteis, *Kochami* by the Angamis and *Khongchai* by the Tangkhul.⁴² There are 31 clans⁴³ under the Thadou tribe in Manipur as recognized by the Government of India.⁴⁴

Though the first census of Manipur taken in 1891 was destroyed and no exact population of the Thadous could be traced, some estimated that their total population already recorded was more than 41,000.⁴⁵ Population of the Thadous provided to the researcher by the Directorate of Census Operation, Manipur is: 47,046 in 1931; 44,976 in 1951; 47,994 in 1961; 59,955 in 1971; 56,467 in 1981; 1,21,994 in 1991; 1,82,594 in 2001;⁴⁶ and 2,15,913 in 2011.⁴⁷

1.2.1 The Word “Thadou”

Thadou is not a name of a particular person but a common name. The word Thadou literally may be translated into two different meanings. First, *Tha* means ‘kill’ and *dou* could mean ‘endure’, ‘tolerate’ and ‘defence’. They are people who kills enemy and defends themselves.

⁴¹ William Shaw, *Notes on the Thadou Kukis* (Guwahati: Spectrum Publication, 1929 [1997]), 11.

⁴² Kaikhotinthang Kipgen, *The Thadou War (1917-19)* (Imphal: Th. Thangkhochon B.A, 1976), 5.

⁴³ According to the Notification the *Thadou* tribe includes the following clans: 1. Guite 2. Doungel 3. Sitlhou 4. Singsit/Singson 5. Kipgen 6. Haokip 7. Chongloi 8. Hangsing 9. Lamhao/Touthang 10. Lotjem 11. Haolai 12. Tuboi 13. Sa`um 14. Khuolhou 15. Lupo 16. Lupheng 17. Misao 18. Mate 19. Baite 20. Lungdim 21. Ngailut 22. Kiloung 23. Insun 24. Jongbe 25. Lunkim 26. Lenthang 27. Thangngew 28. Changsan 29. Lhangum 30. Khoungthang and 31. Lhanghal/Hanghal. Jalun Haokip, “Tribe min thua boina suhlhap nading; Problem-Focus hilouvin Solution-Focus joh hi`ute (*Thadou* Tribe min thua Recons thulhangsap hilchetna), *Eimi Times*, April 4, 2016, 5-6.

⁴⁴ They were recognized as a tribe by the President Notification under Article No. 342 of the Indian Constitution list Order Notification No. SRO. 2477-A. Ministry of Law & Home Affairs, Govt. of India dated 29th October, 1956 at New Delhi in respect of the State of Manipur. www.tribal.nic.in/.../file/4%20-%20Order%2029%20oct%201956.pdf.

⁴⁵ Allen, at al: *Gazetteer of Bengal*, 618 quoted in Haokip, *A Brief History...*, 13.

⁴⁶ Ngamkhohao Haokip, *A Brief History of the Thadou* (Ngahmun: *Thadou* Cultural Festival, 2016), 16.

⁴⁷ <http://manipurtalks.com/index.php?threads/scheduled-tribes-population-of-manipur-as-per-2011-census.7240/>. Accessed on 14-1-2016

Second, *Tha* means ‘energy’, and *dou* means ‘strong’, meaning people who are energetic and who work persistently.⁴⁸ Quoting Scott and Hardiman in Upper Burma and Shan States Gazetteers, T.S. Gangte said, “The word Thadou is a name given by the Burmese to denote their strength, courage, hard work, and fame. Therefore this is an honorific title.”⁴⁹ William Shaw further stated, “Thado, it may be noted, seems to be a Burmese title, apparently denoting courage or ability.”⁵⁰ According to Ngamkhohao, “Thadou or Thado⁵¹ is the title used by the Thadou Kings who once had ruled the *Pegu*⁵² Kingdom for decades. There were about 25 Thadou kings in the said *Pegu* Kingdom.”⁵³ While James wrote, “The word Thadou was first used during the second Tagoung dynasty. Previously Thadou was used as a title of a king but later it came to be used as the name of the nation, as well as a name of a person.”⁵⁴ There are also some elders who believe that the name Thadou might have come from the use of the phrase ‘*thatdoh’un*’ meaning ‘let them be killed’.⁵⁵

1.2.2 The Present Settlement of the Thadous

Along with other tribals, the Thadous are scattered all over Manipur but are mainly concentrated in Churachandpur District, Sadar Hills District, and Chandel District. They have large population in Manipur West bordering up to North Cachar Hills District in Assam.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Haokip, *A Brief History of the Thadou...*, 19.

⁴⁹ T.S. Gangte, *Structure of Thadou Society* (Imphal: Dr. D. Singson, 2003), 41.

⁵⁰ Shaw, *Notes on the Thadou Kuki...*, 11.

⁵¹ *O* in Chin and Lushei (Mizo) pronunciation is equivalent to *ou* of *Thadou*. Since most of the scholars prefer to use *Thado* instead of *Thadou*, the researcher will be using both *Thadou* and *Thado* interchangeably.

⁵² Some elders among the *Thadou* say that *Pegu* is the corrupted name for *Bego*

⁵³ Haokip, *A Brief History of the Thadou...*, 20.

⁵⁴ James, *Nampi Min Kholchilna Seminar* (Moreh, Manipur: Paper Presentation during *Thadou* Workshop, September 15, 2012), 3.

⁵⁵ According to them, while the Thadous were on their migration route from the mythical cave called *Khul*, there were usually frail persons among them who retarded their progress and as such the stronger folks wanted them either to be left behind or to be killed in order to make their journey unhindered just because of them Interview with Pu S.L. Lamthang, President, T.B.A. (I) on March 4, 2007, Kangpokpi by Ngamkhohao Haokip. Haokip, *A Brief History...*, 19.

⁵⁶ In Assam though they are known and called *Thadou*, the Ministry of Home affairs Notification *New Delhi, the 29th OctobeT 1956* S.R.O. 2477A... *THE SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES LISTS (Modification) Order, 1956 PART III* in respect to the state of Assam includes *Thadou* under **Any Kuki Tribes**. Following are the tribes under Any Kuki Tribes: Biате or Biete, Changsan, Chongloi, DOUNgel, Gamalhou, Gangte, Guite, Hanneng, Haokip or Haupit, Haolai, Hengna, Hongsungh, Hrangkhwal or Rangkhoh,

There is a large population in the State of Nagaland and a few hundred also settled in Meghalaya and Tripura. The Thadous have many terms of relationship with the Mizo and they are recognized as an important tribe by the Government of Mizoram. Thus, many Thadou either have migrated or temporarily settled in Mizoram.

1.3 ORIGIN

All the ethnic groups of Manipur, including the Thadou, are descendants of migratory people belonging to Southern Mongoloid group, the Tibeto-Burman, the Indo-Aryans and Tai from historic times.⁵⁷

1.3.1 *Khul* Theory

Legend asserts that the Kuki-Chin-Mizos are originally from the mythological cave called '*Khul*'⁵⁸ which is equally known to Thadous, Paites, Gangtes, Vaipheis, Anals, Moyon and

Jongbe, Khawchung, Khawathlang or Khothalong, Khelma, Kholhou, Kipgen, Kuki, Lengthang, Lhangum, Lhoujem, Lhouvum, Lupheng, Mangjel, Misao, Riang, Sairhem, Selnam, Singson, Sitlhou, Sukte, **Thado or Thadou**, Thangngeu, Uibuh, Vaiphei. www.tribal.nic.in/.../file/4%20-%20Order%2029%20oct%201956.pdf

⁵⁷ Gangmumei Kabui, *History of Manipur Vol 1 (Pre-Colonial Period)*, (New Delhi: National Publishing House, 2003), 12.

⁵⁸ Traditional belief of the story of their origin is that they used to live under the earth, or rather inside it, called *Khul*. Noimangpa was the Chief of this subterranean region. Once Chongthu (ancestor of Thadou) a relative of Noimangpa went hunting porcupines in the jungle with his dog and discovered a large hole, and want to establish himself on the upper earth as he found it inhabited. So he thought of a plan to leave the lower place. Just above that Noimangpa was performing the festival of *Chon* – a festival of number seven, i.e. in this festival all kinds of domestic animals are killed in seven – in which everyone had to attend including Chongja, elder brother of Chongthu. Chongthu performed a sword dance in the festival in which he deliberately waved his sword so vigorously that he injured some of the folks present there, at which all became angered. It should be noted here that it was Chongthu's own plan to incur the anger of Noimangpa so that he could have an excuse for living the underworld kingdom and settle in the upper earth.

After seeing the rude behavior of Chongthu, Noimangpa got into a rage and said "Chongthu had better live in heaven" meaning thereby that he be killed. On hearing this, Chongthu and party left the *Khul* (cave/hole). On reaching the *Khul* they found that a great snake called *Gullheopi*, which guarded the passage kill some individuals of Chongthu's advance party. Chongthu on reaching the spot, bounded his head with a thick cloth called *Phoipi* (made of cotton batting), attacked the *Gullheopi* with his *Joudichem* (two edged sword) cutting the big snake into seven pieces, as he was not to be thwarted in his great ambition. Again it is said that after killing the big snake a lion attempted to retard Chongthu's egress but he got the better of the animal by saying, "Are you not created by God as the king of the animals? If so, I have also been created as the king of man by God and therefore, we should be friends instead of enemies." The lion withdrew and Chongthu's party moved up to the mouth of the *Khul*. They found that it was covered with a stone and one of Chongthu's parties called Vangalpa lifted it up. While he was able to do so, only seven persons were able to get out and then the stone was dropped and all further attempts to raise it were in vain. The seven persons that emerged were Chongthu, Vangalpa (the stone lifter), Khupngam (the dog keeper), and four others whose name are not known but are said to include the progenitors of the Manipuris, the Nagas, the foreigners, and the Burmese. Chongja's party following on could not pass through the passage because of the stone blocking it. Shaw, *Notes on the Thadou Kuki...*, 24-25.

other cognate tribes. In Mizoram they call it ‘*Chhinlung*’ or ‘*Sinlung*’⁵⁹. The *Chhinlung/Sinlung* theory is also a legend current amongst the clans inhabiting the Falam area in the Chin State of Burma.⁶⁰

So far as the question of *Khul* is concerned, its actual location is debatable. Scholar from different backgrounds and document of the British anthropologists and many more literature deduced different location.

According to William Shaw,

The hole in the earth called *Khul* is said to be at the source of *Gun* River which I find to be definitely identified with the Imphal River in the Manipur State. *Gun* being the Thadous for the Imphal River. In all the old stories and legends of the Thadous the river *Gun* is frequently mentioned and is of great fame.⁶¹

However, D. Singson is of the opinion that as the source of *Gun* (Imphal river) that lies in the northern part of Kangpokpi town as the origin of Thadou could be a mistaken belief of our forefather.⁶²

Many historians believe China as the location of *Khul* from where the Thadou tribes made their existence before they immigrated to Burma. Some locate it to be in the South West China or that of the Sining in Central China. Others suggests the term *Chhinlung* to be a derivation of the Chin dynasty of 221-207 B.C.⁶³ A Hmar historian, Hranglien Songate, understands *Sinlung* to be the present Thailand or Silung in Southwest China. Speculation has also been made that this *Sinlung* might have been in Central China.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Another name of *Khul*. The term *Chhinlung* is a Mizo terminology of *Khul*, which means a cave, hole or pit, for the Hmars called it *Sinlung* and the Zomis and *Thadou* called it *Khul*.

⁶⁰ Seikhohao Kipgen, “Political and Economic History of the Kukis of Manipur” (Ph.D Thesis, Manipur University, 2005), 25.

⁶¹ Shaw, *Notes on the Thadou Kuki...*, 26.

⁶² Dongkothang Singson, *Kukite hungkonna Thusim* (Imphal: Author, 1994), 23.

⁶³ H, Thangtungnung, “Origin and Migration of the Zo People” *Man In India* Vol 1-2 (1994), 226. For bibliography 225-240)

⁶⁴ Rochunga Pudaite, *The Education of the Hmar People* (Churachandpur: Author, 1963), 21.

Another group of eminent Thadous interpreted that *Khul* is a passage in the Great Wall of China. While Demkhoseh Gangte was in China during the Mizo National Front (MNF) rebellion⁶⁵, and while in Shanghai, the Chinese told him that the Thadous were the people who went out of China in order to escape the building of the Great Wall of China.⁶⁶ K. Zawla and Sakhong claimed that the Kuki tribes (which include Thadous) came out of the Great Wall of China in about 225 B.C during the reign of Shih Huang Ti whose cruelty was at its height.⁶⁷ Some scholars opine that the Thadous lived in caves during around 246-219 B.C. when the Chinese Emperor Shi-Huang Ti ruled over China. They stated that the Thadous ancestors lived in caves or pit known by their memory as *Khul*, where they were supposed to have hidden themselves from the Chinese Emperor, who had conscripted them as labour force for building the Great Wall of China.⁶⁸

Khupthang Chongloi is in the opinion that *Khul* is not a cave but a fort, a fortress built around the city *Kholjang* (in Burma/Myanmar) in order to defend themselves from Shan people from the North and Pinya people from the South during the war. The fortress still exists in the eastern side of Kalay Hospital.⁶⁹

As per the finding of the Kuki Research Forum in February 2012, *Khul* which means a cave called *Senlung*, which is located within the territory of Kholmunlen Village in Chandel

⁶⁵ MNF (Mizo National Front) was founded on October 22, 1961. This movement fought for the State of Mizoram. They partially achieved their demand when Mizoram was recognized as Union Territory in 1972 and fully achieved it when Mizoram attain Statehood on February 20, 1987. MNF remain as a political party till today.

⁶⁶ T.S. Gangte, *Structure of Thadou Society...*, 4.

⁶⁷ K. Zawla, *Mizo Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Cha Chin – History of Mizo forefathers and their descendants* (Aizawl: Hmar Arsi Press, 1976), 2; cf. Lian H. Sakhong, *In search of Chin Identity: A Study in Religion, Politics and Ethnic Identity in Burma* (Leitsgade, Denmark: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2003), 8.

⁶⁸ Thangtungnung, “Origin and Migration...”, 226.

⁶⁹ Khupthang Chogloi, *Thadou Thusim Chomcha* (Moreh, Manipur: Paper Presentation during *Thadou* Workshop, September 13, 2012), 5.

District, Manipur. Anthropologists and historians of Manipur University and Dhanamanjuri College have confirmed that Palaeolithic culture once flourished in *Senlung*.⁷⁰

1.3.2 Tai Theory

Another theory about the origin of Thadou comes from Ibohal Singh who asserts that the Thadous are of *Tai* origin. He further states that the name Thadou is probably derived by compounding two names *Tho* and *Dai* or *Doi*. The name *Tho* is said to be a local variant of *Dai* or *Doi*. According to Prof. Coedes, the *Thos* were originally a group of *Tai* people who once occupied the eastern part of Indo-China on the east of the Red River and Kwangshi in China.⁷¹ If the *Thadous* are really of *Tai* Origin, they must have shared something with the Ahoms of Assam who claimed to be of *Shan* origin and called themselves as *Tai*, which means ‘Celestial Origin’.⁷²

1.3.3 Manmasi Theory

Another theory is that, the Thadous are one of the lost tribes of Israel, Manasseh. Milui Lenthang Khuplam, in his book, *Manmasi Chate Thulhun Kidang Masa* (The Wonderful Genealogical Tales of Manmasi) stated all the Kuki tribes to be one of the ten lost tribes of the Jews. According to him,

Years back, on 722 B.C. when the Assyrian King Shalmanasser took control over the Northern Kingdom Israel, some of the disperse Manasseh tribe travel or lead a nomadic life and come towards East. In the process of their migration they came across ‘Kutch’ in Afghanistan and settle there for years. From Kutch they travelled on crossing India’s Himalayan Range and come to China and settle at *Khul*, where many people trace back the origin of the Thadous.⁷³

Letkhosei further states,

In this connection in 1999, Hillel Halkin, a well-known author and journalist, and for many years the Israel correspondent for the ‘New York Times’ presented Dr.

⁷⁰ Haokip, *A Brief History...*, 37.

⁷¹ Hareshwar Goshwami, *History of the People of Manipur* (Imphal: Kangla Publications, 2004), 114.

⁷² Edward Gait, *A History of Assam* (Guwahati: EBH Publishers, 1905 [2008]), 78.

⁷³ Paominlen Kipgen, “The Importance of Counseling among the Youth in Thadou-Kuki Community” (M.Div Thesis, Grace Bible College, Churachandpur, 2004), 28.

Khuplam a scroll of confirmation that states the Kuki people as descendants of *Manmasi* (Manasseh), one of the twelve tribes of Israel. In the year 2001, Lars Goran Svensson of Sweden and ‘Sister Angel’, his assistant, met with Dr. Khuplam. They had come to Manipur for a third time to seek out the lost tribes of Israel in order to bring them back to the ‘Promised Land’. In the year 2006-2007, 200 families were taken to Israel.⁷⁴

However Lal Dena refutes the theory of the Jewish connection of the Thadous and stated that *Manmasi* theory may be treated as a myth as it cannot stand the test of historical scrutiny (DNA).⁷⁵

1.3.4 Thadou Dynasty in Myanmar Theory

On the other hand, D. Singson in the book “Structure of the *Thadou* Society” wrote,

The nation Thadou originated from 17 Thadous’ King (Thado Dynasty). From King Thado Jampidingpa Thangja to Thado Maharaja were 17 kings. From Thadou Maharaja till Pu Songthu/Chongthu reigned in AD 1093, there was still many Thadous’ king. The reign of Thado Jampidingpa Thangja was 504 B.C. The 17th and the last of Thado dynasty king Thado Maharaja was AD 176.⁷⁶

James stated, “The name word Thadou was already used before B.C. 600.”⁷⁷ Also in the book *The Glass Palace Chronicles of Burma*, it is found that 17 Thadou kings rule in Burma (Myamnar) around 504 B.C.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Letkhosei Haokip, *Historical Chronology of Kuki People from B.C. 700-1919 AD*. (Published on December 16, 201). <http://kukiforum.com/2010/12/historical-chronology-of-kuki-people-from-B.C.-700-1919-ad/> access on 14-1-2016.

⁷⁵ Lal Dena state thus: “In February 2003, late Isaac L. Hmar and Isaac Thangjom collected about three hundred DNA samples from selected Hmars, Kom, Thadou of Manipur, Huolngo and Zote of Mizoram under the author’s (Lal Dena) supervision. The DNA samples were tested at the laboratory of the Jewish Genetic Project, Haifa, Israel. Preliminary result of the test has shown that they were all within the normal Tibeto-Burman parameters. However, the finding of the DNA test by the Central Forensic Science Laboratory, Calcutta indicated that the few Kuki-Mizo DNA samples returned the unique haplotype found in the Jewish community in Uzbekistan. As it stands now, the theory of the Jewish connection of the Hmar (and for the matter, the Thadous) may be treated as a myth as it cannot stand the test of historical scrutiny.” Lal Dena, *In Search of Identity: Hmar of North-East India* (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2008), 11.

⁷⁶ T.S. Gangte, *Structure of Thadou Society...*, 10.

⁷⁷ James, *Nampi Min Kholchilna Seminar* (Moreh, Manipur: Paper Presentation during *Thadou* Workshop, September 15, 2012), 6.

⁷⁸ Vumthang Sitlhou, “The *Thadous* and Christianity in India: Historical Perspective” *The 8th Pentennial Conference, Thadou Baptist Association, India, Souvenir*, (21-24 February, 2013), 17.

1.4 MIGRATION

Though there are various theories of origin, *Khul* is believed to be the centre of origin. After escaping from *Khul*, Chongthu and his associate roamed around looking for settlement and at last found a big valley as an ideal place for settlement.

1.4.1 Migration to Burma (Myanmar)

On a suitable day, Chongthu told his people that he was getting older and no more in a position to keep on moving from place to place. He therefore, decided to settle at that place on a permanent basis. The place was called *Man-dalai* (present Mandalay of Burma) and was known as *Chungkhopi*. The castle they built was called *Manmasi Kulpi*, (Manmasi Palace).⁷⁹

The *Gazetter of Burma* wrote,

If the ancient Burma annals are to be believed it appears that at some indefinite period before the 6th century B.C., a ruler, according to some of a kingdom in the present Oudh, attacked from the west a people that had come down from the slopes of the Himalayas and settled in the plains between the foot of the mountains and the Ganges and drove them eastwards into the valley of the Irrawaddy. There they settled and built the city of Tagoung, the ruins of which still remains on the east bank of the river about 130 miles above Mandalay.⁸⁰

The above mentioned people are believed to be Thadous. Historians mention two Thado kingdoms in the Tagoung dynasty in Burma. The first dynasty was founded by Abi Raja in around 600 B.C. There seventeen Thado king rule over the Tagoung dynasty.⁸¹ The second

⁷⁹ Tarun Goswami, *Kuki Life and Lore*, quoted from Haokip, *A Brief History...*, 31.

⁸⁰ *Gazetter of Burma*, Compiled by Authority, Vol. I, First published in 1880 under the Title "British Burma Gazetter" at Government Press, Ranggon, Reprint 1983 by Cultural Publishing House, Delhi, P. 142. Quoted from Haokip, *A Brief History...*, 32.

⁸¹ James, *Nampi Min Kholchilna Seminar...*, 3. V. Kipgen in his book "The Ancient History of Thadou" mentioned the 17 kings. They are: 1. Thado Jampidingpa (Thado Jambudi Paradaja) 2. Thado Taung 3. Thado Yangva 4. Thadou Thangya 5. Thado Hlangyangja 6. Thado Sho 7. Thado Gouva 8. Thado Nagya 9. Thado Namya 10. Thado Bahola 11. Thado Paungsho 12. Thado Yaushao 13. Thadou Hsiulauk 14. Thado Taigchang 15. Thado Hsintein 16. Thado Mangja and Thado Maharaja. Sitlhou, "The *Thadous...*", 17.

Tagoung dynasty was founded by Dhaja Raja. Seventeen kings again rule over the second dynasty and out of which ten kings⁸² were Thadous. All these kings were of one descend.⁸³

During the earlier generation the Thadous live together with the Tin Twei (Tagoung) and Hanlingya in the land of *Kawl* (Burma). But the later generation shifted to the West in Chin Hills.⁸⁴ Chongloi in his book “*Thado Hungkondohna*” mentions 21 Thadou villages⁸⁵ that were founded during 1230-1400 AD in Chin Hills. Some of them still exist today and some of the name of the villages has been carried on throughout the migration and village of the same name still exist in Manipur today.⁸⁶

1.4.2 From Myanmar to Mizoram

After Chin Hills and the Chindwin river basins were believed to be their home for many years, some of the Thadous entered into Lushei Hills (present Mizoram) in about 1700 and 1730 AD.⁸⁷ However C. Nunthara is of the opinion that Thadous migrated into Mizoram in about 1540 AD.⁸⁸ Many scholars are in the opinion that the Thadous had indeed come from the south of Manipur. They had languished in Lushei Hills for many decades. They were believed to have been pushed into Lushei Hills from Burma regions. It is clear that the Thadous were one of the earliest migrated Kuki Tribes⁸⁹ who apparently migrated from

⁸² Mention can be made of the nine of them. 1. Dotapao (805 AD) 2. Dotajang (819) 3. Yampao (831) 4. Yammang (881) 5. Letkhan (931) 6. Khanlong (962) 7. Letkhai (1000) 8. Shrikhan (1034) and 9. Shrizit (1062).

⁸³ Chongloi, *Thadou Thusim Chomcha...*, 2-3.

⁸⁴ James, *Nampi Min Kholchilna Seminar...*, 3.

⁸⁵ The name of the founder of the villages and the name of the village are: 1. Pu Lunkim – Leijang 2. Pu Chongloi – Jangnoi 3. Pu Kipgen – Tuhmun 4. Pu Hangsing – Vongjang 5. Pu Sitlhou – Jampi 6. Pu Singson – Khojang (Tiddim) 7. Pu Guite – Lamjang 8. Pu Lenthang – Molbem 9. Pu Mate – Toulmu 10. Pu Baite – Tuithang 11. Pu Haokip – Chahsat (Kansao) 12. Pu Sontah – Sijang 13. Pu Dounjel – Touljang 14. Pu Changsan – Lhungjang/Tungzang 15. Pu Lhungdim (Tungdim) – Sinam 16. Pu Touthang – Gamngai 17. Pu Haokip Kailhah (Haokip descendent) Pu Mangvung – Phaitu 18. Pu Manlun (Chongloi) – Selcham 19. Pu Lhangum – Moulpi 20. Pu Sehtha – Khutlujang and 21. Pu Chongthu/Songthu – Chimnoui/Chimnuai. These were among the first Thadou village founded in Chin Hills.

⁸⁶ Haokip, “Tribe min thua boina suhlhap nading...”, 5.

⁸⁷ Lal Biak Thanga, *The Mizos: A Study in Racial Personality* (Guwahati: United Publication, 1978), 3-4.

⁸⁸ C. Nunthara, *Mizoram: Society and Polity* (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1996), 41).

⁸⁹ All the non-Naga tribals in Manipur are collectively known as Kukis. Kuki is a name of a nation/nomenclature (like Naga) which owned many tribes like: Lushei, Sukte, Zou, Simte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Paite, Hmar, Gangte, Chothe, Khongsai, Chongthu (Songthu), Lamkang, Anal, Aimol, Chothe, Purum, Chiru,

Burma in three waves. The first group comprised of what English anthropologists called the Old Kukis tribes, viz. Hmar, Kom, Anal, Lamkang, Majon, Monshang, Chiru etc. The Thadous were among the second wave.⁹⁰

1.4.3 From Mizoram to Manipur and Other Places

In Lushai Hills, ensuing contest for supremacy between the Lushai and the Thadous, the aggressive Lushais under the leadership of their Chief Lallula got the upper hand, as a result of which the Thadous and Jansens were driven out of the northern Lushai Hills into the Cachar district of Assam. This took place somewhere between 1840 and 1850 AD.⁹¹ According to Shakespear the expulsion of the Thadous into the plains of Cachar or the Southern hills of Manipur took place in about 1848 AD.⁹² But according to Grierson, the Lushai Chief Lallula drove the Thadous from Lushai Hills about in 1810.⁹³ The historical course of migration particularly the Thadou and other Kuki tribes of Manipur after their expulsion from the Lushai Hills took three routes.⁹⁴

Thus, the Thadous moved on to the North Eastern region of India including Manipur where they finally settled. In spite of the large scale migration right from the plains of Burma there is however, a great number of the same ethnic families still living in Burma and Bangladesh which shows of their scattered settlement.

Kom, Mayon, Monsang, Ralte, Mate, Thangkhal, Baite, Koireng, Koren, Aimol, etc. Nehkholun Kipgen, *The Kukiland* (Imphal: Kuki National Front, 1997), 3.

⁹⁰ Haokip, *A Brief History...*, 34.

⁹¹ A.W. Davis, *Gazetter of the North-Lushai Hills*, (Delhi: Adiya Offset Press, 1815 [1987]), 3.

⁹² Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear, *The Lushai-Kuki Clans* (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1912), 6

⁹³ G.A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India Vol-III part - III*, Delhi 1904, p. 49

⁹⁴ The first group consisting of Sitlhaus, Singsons, Changsans, Lhangum and others moved up in the north Cachar hills. The second group consisting of "Sangnao and Khaochangbung chiefs of the Sitlhaus and their adherents moved up along the hills between the Barak river and the valley of Manipur. The third group which was mainly composed of Haokip clan under the leadership of the Chahsat (Chassad) Chief moved up along the hills on the East of the valley of Manipur and so came in due course of time to this present village. Kipgen, *Political and Economic History...*, 60.

1.5 SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE

The Socio-cultural life of Thadous in the past was comparable to the life of the early Christians in Jerusalem. Though there was no common property system there was much love and concern for the poor and needy through sharing, and there was unity among them.⁹⁵ Though the Thadous were rich in culture and customs, due to the influx of Christianity they abandon some of them and continued no more. However, some of their remarkable social institutions and cultural life are noteworthy.

1.5.1 Thadou Language

Dr. Grierson to whom the language was assigned says, the Thadou language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group.⁹⁶ Though the language has not been developed properly, it is an old and rich language. Quoting BS Carey and HN Tuck Commissioners of Chin Hills Khupthang wrote,

The languages of in the land of Haka, the languages in the land of Falam, the languages in the land of Tidim, the languages in the land of Chin (all in Myanmar) all existed only after reaching Chin. The existence of all the languages has been discovered. But the Thadou language existed from time immemorial. Thadou language was used as a common language by all the people of Chin.⁹⁷

According to Philip Thanglienmang,

“The Thadou language is the first language that has been noticed in Burma of the entire Chin-Kuki Linguistic group in 1400 AD. This shows that Thadou language was already in existence long before that. The Thadou language is the first language of all the Chin-Kuki tribes. All the other languages of Chin-Kuki tribes were form out of Thadou language.”⁹⁸

Thadou language has been the lingua franca of all the Chin Tribes in Myanmar and Kuki Tribes in India.

⁹⁵ Haokhomang Lhouvum, “A Study on the Concept of the Supreme Being in the Thadou-Kuki Traditional Religion” (B.D. Thesis, Senate of Serampore College, 2004), 9.

⁹⁶ T.C. Hudson, *Thadou Grammer* (Shillong: Eastern Bengal and Assam Secretariat, 1905), v.

⁹⁷ Bertram S. Carey and Truck, *The Chin Hills Vol I.* (1896), quoted from Jalun Haokip, “Tribe min thua boina suhlhap nading; Problem-Focus hilouvin Solution-Focus joh hi’ute (*Thadou* Tribe min thua Recons thulhangsap hilchetna), *Eimi Times*, (April 4, 2016), 5.

⁹⁸ Philip Thanglienmang, “An Outline of the Evolution of Dialects and Languages Among the Kuki-Chin-Mizo or Zo Group of People” (PhD Thesis) quoted from Haokip, “Tribe min thua boina suhlhap nading, 5

In many cases Thadou Grammar is richer than the English Grammar,⁹⁹ and is very rich in idioms and phrases, constructions, poetic words and proverbial words which are very sacred, holy and difficult to understand by even the children of present generation.¹⁰⁰ The book regarding Thadou language, “A Slight Notice of the Grammar of Thadou” was written by Steward, Liet, R. in 1857 and was published by Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal Vol. XXIV 187-188, and “Thadou Grammar” was written by T.C. Husdon in 1905.

1.5.2 *Som* (Dormitory)

Unlike the other tribe, the traditional *Som* of the Thadou did not built a separate building. The boys choose any house in village which had at least one girl to draw water and offered smokes, liquors and prepare clothes for the lodging of the young men. At night the young men work together under the leadership of a strong, able, selected young man called *Somlamkai/Som Upa* (Dormitory leader) which is recognised by the village chief.

The purpose of *Som* was to know the situation of the village, to exercise the law and order of the village, and to be always ready for warfare.¹⁰¹ In *Som* martial arts, waving of swords, spears etc. were also taught. *Som* is also an educational centre from where arts and crafts is being trained and learned. The best student or member of the dormitory would eventually become one of the functionaries of the Chief as *Semang* and *Pachong* (Ministers in the court of Chief) or *Gal-Lamkai* (Generals) in the Chief’s army.¹⁰² They also work to help widows, widowers, handicaps, the needy, sick, poor and strangers philanthropically voluntarily and patronagely.¹⁰³ *Som* played an important role in shaping the future of the Thadou community

⁹⁹ English Grammar has only two numbers viz. Singular and Plural, while Thadou Grammar has three numbers viz. Singular, Twin and Plural. For e.g. Singular - *Kache tai* (Thadou), I Went (Eng). Plural - *Kache taove* (Thadou) - We went (Eng). Twin – *Kache lhontai* (Thadou) and many other such cases.

¹⁰⁰ Nehkholun Kipgen, *The Kukiland* (Imphal: Kuki National Front, 1997), 6.

¹⁰¹ Vumthang Sitlhou, *Thadou Kuki Christianite Thusim Chomcha* (Motbung: Thadou Christian Centenary Committee, 2008), 9.

¹⁰² P.S. Haokip, *Zalengam: The Land of the Kukis* (Zale’n gam: Kuki National Organization, 1996), 7.

¹⁰³ L. Ngulkhonun Khongsai, *The Kukis: Anthropological Studies of the Kukis* (Imphal: Author, 1994), 38.

and meeting the immediate manpower requirement of the community. Parents encourage their children to go to the *Som*.

1.5.3 *Lom* (Labour Corps)

Lom is a Youth Organization (like the present day Youth Club). *Lom* means pal or group of people who work together. In *Lom* male and female workers may work together. But usually, male and female have separate *Lom*. *Lom* is divided into different kinds, viz. *Lompi* (large pal), *Lomneo* (small pal), *Lomlhang* (common pal) and *Lomgol* (colleague pal),¹⁰⁴ *Lomlai* (middle pal), *Lom Changpah* (grain/children pal).¹⁰⁵

The motive behind this formation of *Lom* was to accomplish the cultivation (jhum) work of each household in a village at the allotted time frame. For the smooth and proper functioning of the *Lom*, the *Lom* organization has its own administrative unit operating under its official known as *Lom kai ho* (leaders) viz. *Lom Upa* (male supervisor), *Lom Nupi* (female supervisor), *Lom Tollai Pao* (volunteer/helper), *Lom Pengkul mut* (Trumper bearer/time keeper), etc.¹⁰⁶

1.5.4 Method of naming a Name

The Thadous add the name of the paternal grandfather to the name of the eldest grandson. The name of the eldest son is derived from the last compound name of the child's grandfather. Suppose the grandfather's name is Paojamang, the last word '**Mang**' will start the child's name invariable. It may be Called **Mang**goulal or **Mang**minthang etc. In case, if the child is a girl then the same will be followed, but it would be grandmother's name. Suppose her grandmother's name is Tingjathem, the last word '**Them**' starts, and the girl's name may be

¹⁰⁴ Khongsai, *The Kukis...*, 39.

¹⁰⁵ KNF, *Kukiland...*, 40.

¹⁰⁶ KNF, *Kukiland...*, 41.

called **Them**joykim or **Them**minnei etc. The second and following sons or daughters are preferred to the child's mother side and other relatives with the same way of giving named.¹⁰⁷

1.6 POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION

The Thadous political system is centered on the village administration. Their village is selected in the dense jungle either on the top of a ridge or on slope. The reason may be for defence and security, because a village builds on the top of a ridge or a hill is not easy prey to attack. Their village were protected and fortified with thorny palisades of bamboos.¹⁰⁸ The political system of the Thadous in the past is understood to have been uncontaminated, un-encroached and un-corrupted. The officials of the administration consists the following:

1.6.1 *Haosa*

Haosa also known as *Haosapu or Innpipu* (chief of a village) is the person who established the village with all his energy and income. Each Thadou village is an independent political unit and the chief is the head in every aspects. All the lands belong to him; whether it is a homestead, a jhum field or a wet paddy field and he can demand anything he requires from his villagers. The villagers have to construct their own houses and to pay basketful of paddy after harvest, known as *changsel*. In case of sale of domestic animals like Mithun, buffalo or marriage of a girl to another village, the chief has his shares.¹⁰⁹ The Chief must be the head of the clan or sub-clans to which he belongs. One cannot simply become chief by virtue of power or wealth.

1.6.2 *Semang-Pachong*

The words *Semang-Pachong* are a local term which means *Mantris* at the village level. *Semang* is the most important member in the council of ministers. It is a great privilege for the

¹⁰⁷ P. Misao. "The Early Kuki Chin" *Manipur Past and Present*, Vol 3 edited by Naorem Sanajaoba (New Delhi: Mittal Publication, 1995) 148.

¹⁰⁸ Prim Suantak Vaiphei, *Church Growth among the Hill tribes in Manipur, N.E. India* (Imphal: Author, 1986),24-25.

¹⁰⁹ Misao, "The Early Life of Kuki Chin...", 204.

village Chief to have a man of wisdom and integrity to be *Semang*. Though the office of *Semang* is not hereditary, he can be re-appointed for this coveted post provided that his presence and participation in governing the village is essential. In the event of the death of the Chief leaving a minor son, the *Semang* governs the village till he grows to eligible age. According to P.C. Misao, “*Semang* is generally chosen from a minority clan in the village, the intention probably is to establish goodwill among all clans of the village who are well versed in customary laws and the sole spokesman of the Chief.”¹¹⁰ Thus, *Semang* is a very important official of the Chief to whom many official duties of the Chief’s are also entrusted.

The office of *Pachong* is concerned with the defence of the village and the security of life and properties within his jurisdiction. He is also the leader in the village labour organization. Thus, it is his bounden duty to maintain order, discipline and social ethics among the members of labour organization called *Lompi*. Under his leadership and instructions the able youths were trained in the art of warfare, prepared and equipped them with weapons for the times of external threats. It is the responsibility of *Pachong* to oversee that the villagers live in peace and harmony. *Pachong* is like an Army General whose main concern is defence of the village, of course, with the assistance of the youths.¹¹¹

1.6.3 *Lhangsam*

The literal meaning of *Lhangsam* is ‘Villager crier’ who usually shouts at the top of his voice from a raised platform, called *Kemchon*, built purposely near the Chief’s courtyard. He is one of the council member in-charge as the Secretary – Information and Publicity.¹¹² In fact, he proclaims to the village about the Chief’s order. In addition to this, he is also supposed to convene a meeting of the councillors. He convenes meetings of the council and conveys

¹¹⁰ P.C. Misao, *History and Custom of the Thadou-Kuki, 11-12, quoted from Kipgen, Political and Economic History..., 113.*

¹¹¹ Kipgen, “Political and Economic History..., 113.

¹¹² Kipgen, “Political and Economic History..., 115.

decisions of the council to the general public".¹¹³ In the absence of modern communication systems, information was spread through the words of the mouth.

1.6.4 *Thihkheng/Thihsu*

The office of *Thihkheng* went to the person who had the highest dexterity in blacksmithy. His duty is to manufacture and repair agricultural implements or tools like hoes, axes, spades, swords, knives etc. Weapons or armaments were also manufactured by him. As he was the authorized and officially recognized blacksmith of the village, so whatever he did was free of cost. But in recognition of his service, he was entitled a basket-full of rice from each family annually, the share of which could be lower than what the Chief received. The blacksmith was also entitled a meat-share in animals killed in wild games called *Thihkheng Sa*. He was also exempted from payment of taxes to the Chief.¹¹⁴

1.6.5 *Thempu*

The *Thempu* (village priest) serves as the official priest for the entire village. He also plays the role of medicine man, an official in-charge of the community's health. He is appointed by the Chief. The duty of *Thempu* is to attend all the villagers in times of their sickness and also officiated over social and religious ceremonies. He served as both healer and leader of the village in all matters pertaining to religion. He is both a psychologist and a physiologist, who could tell the symptoms of illness from the pulse of the person and the way for recovery. He also possesses knowledge of medicinal herbs which he learns at a cost of lots of money and time. This was the privileges of a few persons and thus they were respected by the people. With his magical incantation, he allegedly cured various diseases and he also performed all sorts of rites, rituals and sacrifice.

¹¹³ T.S. Gangte, *The Kukis of Manipur: A Historical analysis* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing house, 1993), 130.

¹¹⁴ Gangte, *The Kukis of Manipur...*, 131; cf. KNF, *Kukiland...*, 61-62.

In return, the *Thempu* received a bucketful of paddy as tributes from the villagers annually, and a meat-share of hunted wild game called *Thiem-sa*, in token acknowledgement of his service to the village community. Being a chief's officials he was also exempted from paying all kinds of taxes which were levied on the common villagers.¹¹⁵

1.6.6 *Haosa Inpi* (Village Court)

The chief's house generally served as the court of the village known as *Khosung Inpi Thutanna* (village chief court). The *Khosung Inpi Thutanna* had all the powers to decide any case and the chief's verdict is final and binding. Also being the administrative head of the village, the chief governed in accordance with the inherited customary laws and traditional practices. The chief enjoyed and exercised enormous powers. He summoned and presided over the meeting of the village council and gave the final decision on all matters. The chief performed judiciary, executive and legislative functions in the day to day administration of the village in consultation with his council of ministers called *Semang-Pachong*.¹¹⁶

1.7 RELIGIOUS BELIEF

There is no precise term in Thadou that may correspond to the current English word 'religion'. The Thadous homo religious simply uses the term *Pu hou – Pa hou* that may be translated as 'that which the forebears worshipped'.¹¹⁷ The term *Sakho*¹¹⁸ is used by some sections but is not universally recognized. Here are some elements of primal Thadou religion and the gods (spirit) they worship.

¹¹⁵ Kipgen, "Political and Economic History...", 117.

¹¹⁶ KNF, *Kukiland...*, 62-63.

¹¹⁷ Hemkhochon Chongloi, "A Historical-Phenomenological Study of Primal Kuki Religious Symbolism with special Reference to Indoi in the Framework of Mircea Eliade's Interpretation of Religious Symbolism" (D.Th Thesis, Senate of Serampore, 2004), 131.

¹¹⁸ *Sakho* or *sakhua* (in Mizo) is used by other cognate tribes. Mizos used it to denote the ritual performed in family or sub-clan circles.

1.7.1 *Pathen/Chung Pathen*

The Thadous believe in the existence of one Supreme Being called *Pathen*¹¹⁹. *Pathen* is a combination of two words *Pa* (Father) and *then* (Holy), meaning ‘Holy Father.’ *Chung* means ‘above’, and therefore is an attribute of *Pathen*, rather than part of the name, denoting the abode of *Pathen*, which presumably is located high up in the sky.¹²⁰ This idea is more or less similar with the biblical understanding of the ‘Holy God.’ *Pathen* possesses creative power and created the world and everything in it whether tangible or intangible. God as having a creative power can be substantiated by his creation of the five distinct divisions of the upper atmosphere of the earth.¹²¹

1.7.2 *Nungzai*

The Thadous have an anthropomorphic idea of God as a male being, having a wife called *Nungzai*.¹²² The name *Nungzai* is figures in many incantations along with *Pathen*. ‘*Pathen nalhaiyin, Nungzai nalhaiyin*’ (may *Pathen* and *Nungzai* be propitiated) is the beginning of many incantations. But an important feature to note is that ‘*Nungzai*’ also known as ‘*Thennu*’ is never mentioned apart from her pairing with *Pathen* in incantations, which evinces the fact that apart from fulfilling a formula in incantation *Nungzai* has no independent existence as god.¹²³

1.7.3 *Noimangpa*

Noimangpa literally means ‘one who rules the underworld’. This name also occurred in many incantations, paired with *Pathen* as ‘*chunga Pathen nalhaiyin, noiya Noimangpa nalhaiyin*’,

¹¹⁹ After the advent of Christianity, the word *Pathen* is used to denote God.

¹²⁰ Chongloi, “A Historical-Phenomenological Study...”, 131.

¹²¹ They are: *Vansam* (the extreme top beyond that nothing exists, the abode of God Himself), *Thangvan* (abode of the stars and of the spirits of the dead), *Lengvan* (abode of the planets and spirits of the dead), *Vanthamjol* (abode of the evil spirits), *Vanlaijol* (where the birds fly and are visible to the eyes from the earth below.) Goswami, Tarun. *Kuki Life and Lore* (Halflong: North Cachar Hills District Council, 1985), 466.

¹²² Lhouvum, *A Study on the Concept of the Supreme Being...*, 19.

¹²³ Chongloi, “A Historical-Phenomenological Study...”, 133.

(may *Pathen* above and *Noimangpa* below be propitiated).¹²⁴ *Noimangpa* comes in incantations where the ritual involves disturbances of the soil, e.g., digging of holes for *sekon*, *doikhom*, *selkhom* etc. which involved a dialogue between *Pathen* and *Noimangpa* enacted by the priest regarding who should grant permission for such human's action. *Noimangpa* is declared as in charge of affairs below but ultimately *Pathen* grants permission.¹²⁵

1.7.4 *Indoi*

The relationship between God and human being is very complex in the Thadou traditional conception. The transcendental concept of God is obvious but the immanent concept of God is not clear. The transcendental concept was embedded in myths, oral traditions and rituals. However, the relationship of God to human beings cannot be ignored for they have *indoi* as the presence of God with them. It is said that the Thadous worshiped *Indoi* for they don't know how to worship the Supreme God.¹²⁶

Indoi is the "house-god" or the "house-magie" every Thadou household worship believing it to be the preserver of house's prosperity. It is a bundle of charms which is made either by the *thempu* (priest) or by any other person who has the requisite knowledge of what is required and of the signification of the object used and of the formula used in putting them together. Various myths are in circulation orally about the origin of *Indoi*. The common belief of the origin of *Indoi* is: In a village called *Molphei*, Chin Hills (Myanmar), there lived a person named *Kimchal* of *Hangsing* clan. He had a daughter named *Zaphal* whose beauty spread far and wide; even the *Thilhas* (demons) were attracted to her beauty. One day she failed to return from the *jhum* field located at a place called *sisep*. Frantic search for the missing damsel was unsuccessful and the parents were in deep grief. Seeing the condition of the girl, the chief of *Molphei Thilhas* who have stolen *Zaphal* to be his daughter in-law took pity on her parents'

¹²⁴ Goswami, *Kuki Life and Lore...*, 183.

¹²⁵ Chongloi, "A Historical-Phenomenological Study...", 134.

¹²⁶ Lhouvum, "A Study on the Concept of the Supreme Being...", 35.

pathetic life revealed himself in the dream of Zaphal's father and disclosed what actually had happened. The father was further instructed to look upon the branch of *se* tree at his backyard in the morning where he will find a bundle with some ingredients which he should hang at the roof near the main entrance of the house and worship the element. Kimchal indeed found the bundle at the designated place, which later on came to be known as *Indoi* and carried out as he was instructed in the dream. He became wealthy, begetting many sons and daughters as well. The neighbours began to emulate his action, and in no time all adopted the practice.¹²⁷

Indoi consists of seven objects bound with a single cord to a bamboo spike, some of the objects being ornamented with feathers from a white – cock. The spike is thrust into the thatch in the porch of the house. The component parts of *Indoi* according to Shaw are: 1) *Vohpi luhom* (a pig's skull),¹²⁸ 2) *Kelcha ki* (a goat's horn),¹²⁹ 3) *Um neo khat* (a miniature gourd ladle),¹³⁰ 4) *Belval* (a miniature gourd, complete, containing water and seeds),¹³¹ 5) *Um neo khat* (that is a circular stand for a jar, but it is represented in a purely conventional manner by a fragment of split stick with a coiled silver of bamboo peel),¹³² 6) *Chempong* (a minute bamboo dao) of *Kol-thih* (i.e. iron of “Alva” - Burma),¹³³ and 7) *Tengcha* (a minute bamboo spear-head).¹³⁴ These seven are bound together on a single cord fibre made from the

¹²⁷ Gangte, *The Kukis of Manipur...*, 208-220.

¹²⁸ To confer vigour and fertility like that of the fabled sow of *Lheival* (the place of origin of men), which had ten bonnives at a farrow, and which rooted up and rooted down, overthrowing great trees, even as disease shall be uprooted and cast forth from the bodies of the owner of the house and all that dwell therein.

¹²⁹ To confer beauty and vigour like that of the goat of *Heilhongpi* (the rock that ‘eats all water’ and stands in the sea where the rivers flow into it), with curling horns and long silky hair.

¹³⁰ To confer plenty in all that can be lifted in a ladle-water, wine (i.e. rice-wine), grain, etc.

¹³¹ To confer rapid increase, prosperity and perfection like that of the gourd and wealth in cattle, crops, and all else, that shall never dry up.

¹³² To ensure that all wealth acquired by the owner is encircled and bound in as with a *belval*, and cannot escape or be lost.

¹³³ To ensure that even as such a dao will cut through everything there is high up or low down (*kol-sah, kol-Ihang*), so all evil spirits that bring disease or misfortune shall be cleft and driven away from the body of the owner of the house and all that dwell therein.

¹³⁴ To ensure that even as from one horizon to the other (Kolsah Kolhang) the spear is used of all men for slaying and killing, and there is nothin that is not pierce by it. So all misfortune and disease and ghosts (pugao pagao, i.e. ghosts of cognates and ghosts of agnates) shall be pierced and driven off.

fibre of the plant *Khaopi* and with the cord bound fast to a bamboo spike¹³⁵. The spear head is at one end of the cord, the dao at the other. On the two gourd articles are feathers from a white cock fastened with wax.¹³⁶

1.7.5 Malevolent Spirits

Though the Thadous believe in the Supreme God *Pathen*, they believe *Pathen* to be a good, loving and caring God who will do no harm to his creation. They also believe in the existence of evil spirits. These spirits were supposed to be responsible for all misfortunes like sickness, accidents, madness, unnatural deaths, failures of crops, etc. So they worship to appease the malevolent spirits they know and fear in their day to day life. Some of the spirits are: *Pheisam/Maltong*,¹³⁷ *Gamhoise*,¹³⁸ *Thilha/Lhadam*,¹³⁹ *Joumi*,¹⁴⁰ *Lhangnel*,¹⁴¹ etc. The

¹³⁵ The bamboo spike is cut from the cultivated bamboo only and confers vitality and straight strong growth like that of the cultivated bamboo and ensures prolific increase like the green shoots which the bamboo puts forth early. The cord ensures that as the plant from which it came was produced from the earth and has ten layers of cortex, so shall the owner of the house and all that dwell therein be strong and that even as it is bound about the bamboo spike, so is all disease, misfortune and evil bound fast and prevented from attacking the owner of the home and its inmate, and that even so are cattle and crops and all forms of wealth bound so that they cannot escape him.

¹³⁶ Shaw, *Notes on the Thadou Kuki...*, 152; cf. Vumthang Sitalhou, *Thadou Kuki Christianite Thusim Chomcha* (Motbung: Thadou Christian Centenary Committee, 2008), 17.

¹³⁷ The term literally means 'one without leg', i. e., one whose leg is cut off at the thigh. *Pheisam* was originally a human being. One day while felling tree one branch fell on one of his legs that cut off his leg at the thigh. The wound became septic so that he was kept isolated at the back porch of house. He was made to take food and drink there. The indifferent and unsympathetic treatment made him bitter. A devil taking pity on him conferred upon him supernatural power so that he can make people rich or poor as he likes. Some people began to worship him to acquire wealth. The proper way to worship *Pheisam* is to keep heart and liver of animals killed at the back porch of house. It is believed to have supernatural powers in making people rich or poor as he wills, and even can cause extinction of a whole family member. H. Chongloi, "An Analysis of Kuki Understanding of God: An Attempt towards Recapturing Kuki primal Vision" (M. Th. Thesis, Senate of Serampore College, 1995), 47.

¹³⁸ *Gamhoise* is believed to be the king of spirits. It is believed that he is the devil/spirit of the jungle and *immunse* (devil/spirit of the house/village), meaning thereby "a curse place." Unnatural deaths are attributed to this spirits. Gangte, *The Kukis of Manipur...*, 161-162.

¹³⁹ *Thilha* also called *lhadam* (ghost) is believed to be the spirit of the dead people. Their main work is to play on mortal men, threatening them when they go to the jungle and sometimes in the village at night. They are perceived more of as beings having a distinct collective existence, invisible to human being.

¹⁴⁰ *Jou* denotes 'a densely forested region', and *mi* means 'human' or 'dweller'. *Joumi* is one that inhabits the dense forest. Naturally villagers residing in the midst of forests encounter this being. *Joumi* is fond of domestic fowls and so come at night in the village to hunt for them. *Joumi* is elastic in the body so that it can stand as tall as any tree, can reach out to long distance for which it can catch fowls kept at the roof of house. People who are confronted by *joumi* could die of shock. Chongloi, "A Historical-Phenomenological Study...", 136.

¹⁴¹ *Lhang* means 'below' or 'lower region' whereas *nel* denotes an aureole, therefore *lhangnel* refers to 'a being of lower region that has an aureole'. By 'lower' is meant the deep waters. *Lhangnel* is said to be capable of

mansions of all the spirits were believed to be found in unnatural big and aged trees, big hole and large rocks, precipices and cliffs, landslides and earth-holes, lakes, thick forests, springs near old and new jhums, innermost corner of houses, oceans, bays, big rivers, in large animals like lions, snakes, python and stags, olden and vacated village, beneath the dwelling houses etc.¹⁴²

The above mentions were a mostly a practices before the arrival of Christianity among the Thadous. With the advent of Christianity and the conversion of the Thadous the whole pictures change. They not only abandoned their old religious practices, they also unfortunately abandoned most of the traditions, cultures, customs and socio-political practices. Most of them are practiced no more.

transforming itself to various animals such as big serpent, a small snake, wild cock, elk etc. Goswami, *Kuki Life and Lore...*, . 215-217.

¹⁴² Khongsai, *The Kukis...*, 28-29.

CHAPTER – 2

ADVENT OF CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE THADOUS IN MANIPUR

It is interesting to note that though there were no records of Christian activity in Manipur before 1894, New Testament in Manipuri language was already in print in 1824. Information about the printing of the New Testament in the Manipuri language is found in the Serampore Memoir of Translation kept by William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward.¹⁴³ In one of his report William Pettigrew wrote,

There is no record of the gospel being introduced or any missionary entering this interesting and beautiful country up to the end of 1893. William Carey and his associates at Serampore evidently came in touch with some Manipuris, for we have the whole New Testament translated into their language and printed by the press at Serampore in 1824. There is only one known copy of this work, and that is in the Library of the British and Foreign Bible Society, London.¹⁴⁴

Christianity in Manipur was mainly brought in by two missionary agencies. In the Northern part it was brought by the Arthington Aborigines Mission who later on handed over their mission field to the American Baptist Mission (ABM); whereas in the Southern part Christianity was brought by an independent missionary agency known as Thado Kuki Pioneer Mission (TKPM).

2.1 ARTHINGTON ABORIGINES MISSION

Arthington Aborigines Mission (AAM) was a private mission society of an English millionaire name Robert Arthington of Leed, England. Desiring to open a work among any unevangelized tribes in and around Assam or elsewhere in India, and with the permission

¹⁴³ According to the Memoir the work of translation was begun in 1814 and it was not finished until 1827. Curiously, some seven page (pp.225-232) of the work had been acknowledged to one Manipuri Bihari Singh. But we are not certain whether this Manipuri had been converted or not. The translation of the Manipuri New Testament had been printed at least 1000 copies, and by the end of the year the copies were in a 'state of distribution'. The work was printed in Deb Nagari script but the language used was old Manipuri. K.M. Singh, *History of the Christian Mission in Manipur and Neighbouring State* (New Delhi: Mittal Publication, 1991), 53.

¹⁴⁴ Mary Mead Clark, *A Corner in India* (1907), 158, quoted from Singh, *History of the Christian Mission in Manipur...*, 53.

from Assam Baptist Mission, Robert commissioned about thirteen Missionaries in 1890 and one of them was William Pettigrew.¹⁴⁵ Arthington Mission had an unusual rule that included: the missionaries should be unmarried; shifting of mission to a new place after proclaiming the gospel, leaving the organization of the church to other mission; a missionary should not be confined to one mission field for more than three years.¹⁴⁶

2.1.1 Background of William Pettigrew before Reaching Imphal

William Pettigrew¹⁴⁷ was formally from the Arthington Aborigines Mission. He worked for four years at Calcutta and Dhaka. The massacre of 1891 where seven British officials were killed by the Manipuris, which was followed by Anglo-Manipuri war, attracted his attention to Manipur.¹⁴⁸ Pettigrew and his friend J. Craighead made several attempts to enter Manipur but the Political Agent of the State refused permission. Then the duo moved to Cachar in February 1892 to entered Manipur as soon as the Government would permit them.¹⁴⁹ Later, Craighead was transferred to Assam proper and thereby only Pettigrew was left alone at Cachar.¹⁵⁰ As soon as Pettigrew arrive Cachar, he started learning Manipuri and Bengali. He was taught by a man called Janmajoy Singh.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 20.

¹⁴⁶ Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism...*, 31-32.

¹⁴⁷ William Pettigrew was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on 5th January, 1869 and was educated at Livingstone College, London. By denomination, Pettigrew originally belonged to the Church of England. At the age of 21, he accepted the challenge to go to a foreign field in India. He left England for India on 16 December, 1890 and arrive Bengal the same year. He was already twenty and unmarried when he arrived Bengal. Being an Anglican, Pettigrew had received infant baptism, but after coming to India, he came to be convinced of the doctrine of believer's baptism and received believer's baptism from the hands of Rev. R. Wright Hay, a missionary of Baptist Missionary Society in Dhaka. *The Assam Mission of the ABMU: Report, 1895*, 5.

¹⁴⁸ Jonah M. Solo and K. Mahangthei, *Forty Years in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew* (Imphal: Christian Literature Centre), viii.

¹⁴⁹ Paolam Kipgen, "The Thadou Kuki Christian Mission Work in Manipur." (M.Div Thesis, Chil Chil Theological Seminary, Kanglatongbi: Manipur, 2008), 28.

¹⁵⁰ Jonah M. Solo, "Captain the Rev. William Pettigrew," *Souvenir: Phungyo Baptist Church, Ukhrul 1901-2001 Centenary Celebration 26th Sept - 29th Sept. 2002*, edited by David L. Shimray (Ukhrul: Phungyo Baptist Church, 2002) 63.

¹⁵¹ Janmajoy Singh afterwards acted as a translator of Pettigrew's *Mitei Lon-gi Vyakaran*, Part II (Manipuri Grammar) prescribed for the students of the Upper Primary Schools of the State. Singh, *History of the Christian Mission in Manipur...*, 56.

On 12 September, 1892 Maxwell the British Political Agent of Manipur again received a letter from Mr. Dalmas, Secretary of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary and the Aborigines Mission, asking permission for William Pettigrew to start Missionary activities among Hindu Meiteis.¹⁵² But Maxwell not wishing to antagonize the Orthodox Hindu Manipuris, would not permit missionary activity in the state. Moreover the British policy in India that time towards the princely states particularly in matters of religion was “Non-interference” or “Strict neutrality.”¹⁵³

2.1.2 Pettigrew’s Early Work in Imphal (1894-1895)

Having failed to obtain permission, Pettigrew again requested to Porteous, the officiating Political Agent in Manipur who hold office while Maxwell went on furlough. Porteous allowed him (apparently without the knowledge of his superior) to enter Manipur in December 1893. Grabbing the opportunity, Pettigrew arrived at Imphal on February 6, 1894.¹⁵⁴ Porteous on friendly terms with Pettigrew granted permission to open two Lower Primary schools at Moirangkhom and Thangmeiband, where the latter was named after him as “Pettigrew Lower Primary School.” He also established two other Upper Primary Schools at Terakeithel and Singjamei.¹⁵⁵ He wrote Manipuri Primer and Manipuri Grammar, some Manipuri text books, English – Bengali – Manipuri Dictionary, and some other books in order to speed up his education activities. Thus, Pettigrew became one of the pioneers of modern

¹⁵² Adakho Poji K. “Advant of Christianity in Manipur and its impact on the Mao Naga Tribe.” *Indian Church History Review* Indian Church History Review Vol XLIV/1 (June 2010): 67. (65-81).

¹⁵³ Lal Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of the Missionary Movement in North East India with Special Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills. 1894-1947* (Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1988), 33.

¹⁵⁴ Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 21.

¹⁵⁵ Thongkholal Haokip, “Kuki Churches Unification Movements” *Journal of North East India Studies* Vol. 2/1 (July - December 2012), 34.

education in Manipur.¹⁵⁶ Soon the number of the student reached 80, mostly children of Government Officials.¹⁵⁷

Believing that his missionary call was among the Meiteis, beside his school work, Pettigrew soon began his proselytising activities among them in the two Lower Primary Schools and preached the gospel to the Hindu Meiteis. The Meitei construed this as deliberate attempt to impose upon them the “government’s religion”.¹⁵⁸ This evoked bitter resentment among the plain people of Vaishnavite Hindus, who later succeeded in persuading the political agent to discontinue the work of Pettigrew.¹⁵⁹

Finding the Hindu Meiteis being alarmed by Pettigrew’s work; Maxwell, after returning from furlough (1895), ordered Pettigrew to immediately stop his work and leave Imphal.¹⁶⁰ He further suggested that Pettigrew should shift his missionary work to the non-Hindu hill tribes who still practiced primeval religion with their own set of beliefs and practices.¹⁶¹ Moreover, the Government of India also served him an ultimatum,¹⁶² and informed him that the State authorities could not guarantee his safe conduct if he did not wish to accept the proposal to leave Imphal.¹⁶³ Pettigrew accept this suggestion in the hope that one day he would be able to

¹⁵⁶ Lolly, *The Baptist Church in Manipur...*, 20-21.

¹⁵⁷ Kim Vaiphei, ed, *The Manipur Baptist Convention: The First One Hundred Years of Christianity in Manipur, 1896-1996* (Imphal: The MBC Literature Committee, 1997), 2.

¹⁵⁸ Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism...*, 33.

¹⁵⁹ Thongkhosei Haokip, *Overcoming Church Division in Manipur: Kukis’ Perspective*. (zspdelhi.wordpress.com/2008/03/10/overcoming-church-division-in-manipur-Kukis-perspective) Published on February 27, 2008 and accessed on 12-13-2016. Thongkhosei Haokip is an ordained minister of the Kuki Baptist Convention. He taught History of Christianity at the Academy of Integrated Christian Studies (AICS) at Aizawl, Mizoram. He has done his doctoral research under South Asia Theological Research Institute (SATHRI), Bangalore.

¹⁶⁰ Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 22. (Maxwell was personally friendly to Pettigrew, and did not personally oppose the missionary enterprise. But, since he was administering the State on behalf of the minor Raja, he was not willing to antagonize the Hindu Meiteis).

¹⁶¹ Poji K. “Advent of Christianity in Manipur...”, 68.

¹⁶² Pettigrew himself described thus: “To accept one of the conditions was the ultimatum sent to us from Shillong a year and a half later. Say ‘Yes’ to proposal of leaving the valley alone and establishing mission headquarters among the headhunting Naga tribe called the Tangkhul Naga... say ‘No’ and leave the State for good” Solo, “Captain the Rev. William Pettigrew...”, 64.

¹⁶³ Singh, *History of the Christian Mission in Manipur...*, 61.

resume work on behalf of the Manipuris in the plains. Pettigrew was allowed to carry on his work among the Meiteis for only six months.¹⁶⁴

2.1.3 Shift from Arthington Mission to American Baptist Mission

Meanwhile the Arthington Mission that sponsored Pettigrew had to withdraw its support because it was not willing to establish a permanent mission station in any particular place. Moreover, Pettigrew had already completed five years' service which was more than the three years' stipulation in a particular place.¹⁶⁵ On the other hand, Downs wrote that Pettigrew resigned from Arthington mission and joined the American Baptists for other possible reasons.¹⁶⁶

After discontinuing his work in Arthington Mission, Pettigrew applied to the American Baptist Mission explaining to the leaders that unless Manipur field was taken immediately it would be closed to missionary work. Accordingly, the Baptist missionary conference at Sibsagar took up the matter and recommended him on condition of his ordination as church leader by the Sibsagar Baptist church, Assam.¹⁶⁷ As per the Minutes of the Conference of the Assam Missionaries of the American Baptist Missionary Union, December 14 -22, 1895, Resolution No. 7, 1&2, Pettigrew was accepted¹⁶⁸ and his Ordination service was conducted

¹⁶⁴ Frederick S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God: A brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India: The Mission Period 1836-1950* (Guwahati: Christian Literature Centre, 1971[2014]), 65.

¹⁶⁵ Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism...*, 31-32.

¹⁶⁶ He wrote: "It is not entirely clear as to why he did this. He had developed close relationships with Baptist in Dhaka, and had apparently adopted Baptist views on a number of matters. In fact he had been re-baptized in the Baptist mode. But the Arthington Mission did not seem to object to this and he remained under their employ for some years afterwards. It was probably a combination of the realization that Arthington would not have permitted him to remain in Manipur very long and a desire to get married. He married a Miss Goreham just out from London, within nine months of having joined American Baptist Mission in 1896." Frederick S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Vol V, Part 5* (Bangalore: CHAI, 1992), 85.

¹⁶⁷ Semion Hmar, *Christianity in Manipur and the Work of the Missionary Especially in Southern Manipur*. <http://hmarkhawlien.blogspot.com/2013/08/christianity-in-manipur-and-work-of.html>. (Accessed on 15/1/2016), 1.

¹⁶⁸ 7th. Therefore be it resolved – 1st "That we the conference of Assam Missionaries encourage Mr. Pettigrew to unite with the Sibsagar Baptist Church and seek ordination at the hands of the church," and 2nd "that we cordially endorse Mr. Pettigrew's application to the ABM Union for appointment as a missionary of our Society, subject to such ordination, and heartily recommend that he be accepted and designated to Manipur to

on December 22, 1895.¹⁶⁹ After the Triennial Conference at Sibsagar, and the Executive Committee at Boston in July 1896, the American Baptist Mission decided to take over the work in Manipur, which had already been commenced by Pettigrew in 1894 under the sponsorship of the Arthington Mission. Thus, Pettigrew was accepted as a member of the Sibsagar Baptist Church (Assam), and was ordained and commissioned as the first missionary to Manipur.¹⁷⁰ He became the pioneer Christian Missionary of the Hills in Manipur.

2.2 THE AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSION

The American Baptist Mission was the first to establish permanent work in North East India. The first ABM stations in NEI were not established for the purpose of evangelizing the people of that area but strategic outposts in a campaign to evangelize the Shan tribes of Northern Burma and Southern China. However Mission's work had in fact been among the Assamese people and from there it spread to all the North Eastern states of India.

2.2.1 Pettigrew's Early Struggle among the Hill Tribes

After giving up the work in Imphal on September 1894, Pettigrew searched for a suitable location for his new mission. There are two traditions telling his selection of a Mission field before he finally selected Ukhrul. According to Southern tradition, Pettigrew went to the Thadou Village of Senvon in the Southern hills and asked the chief, Kamkholun Singson for permission to work in that place. But the chief denied the permission, and so the missionary went to the Tangkhul area. The second or Northern tradition narrates that Pettigrew went to Mao Songsong villang, near Mao Gate, and tried to purchase land from Sani Kopani, a

labor among the Tangkhul Hill Tribe.” *The Assam Mission of the ABMU: Report, 1895*, 5, cf. Elungkiebe Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material* (Guwahati: Christian Literature Centre, 2005), 3-4.

¹⁶⁹ *The Assam Mission of the ABMU: Report 1895*, 11.

¹⁷⁰ Milton S. Sangma, *History of American Baptist Mission in North-East India*, Vol. 1, (Mittal Publications, 1987), 274.

Government interpreter and man of influence. The chiefs of the Mao tribes also refuse to give permission to Pettigrew to open mission field at Songsong village.¹⁷¹

2.2.2 Ukhrul Mission Field

After the failure of the two attempts Pettigrew then headed to the west and arrived at Ukhrul¹⁷² in January 1895, and took over the work on February 1, 1895. At first he started building the houses for the work and simultaneously starts learning Ukhrul dialect. From March to October the building of the temporary Mission bungalow, out-house and the school took up most of his time, with a few hours to learn the language. By January 1897, the school building was completed and necessary arrangements were made to start a school, but the parents were not willing to send their children to school. In this he was assisted by Major Maxwell while visiting Ukhrul, who made it clear to the Tangkhul chiefs that they should send their boys to the school or else they will be punished severely or put to prison. Then twenty boys from Ukhrul got enrolled and the school starts to function from February 19, 1897.¹⁷³

2.2.2.1 Establishment of Ukhrul Baptist Church

After five years of hard toil and labour, twelve students (all boys) were converted and Pettigrew baptized them at Ngayira Spring well on September 29, 1901. This was the first ever baptismal sacrament administered in Manipur. In the following year on February 1902,

¹⁷¹ Kopani perceived that Pettigrew was going to introduce a new religion, hence told him that this could not be done without the consent of *Khulakpas* (chiefs) of the Mao tribe who were therefore called for consultation. Therefore, the elders of the 16 Mao villages were called together for a decision on Pettigrew's request for permission to buy a piece of land. But the *Khulakpas* refused permission telling the missionary that they wanted nothing to do with his religion, and that he should not remain on their soil any longer. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 65-66.

¹⁷² Ukhrul is about 40 miles from the capital city Imphal reached by an ordinary hill path. There were no government roads constructed yet. The population was estimated at 23,000. Like the rest of the Nagas, they were animistic in their worship, very superstitious, and addicted to "Zu" drinking to a great extent. Pettigrew had to travel afoot 35 miles up and down the three mountain ranges to Ukhrul, 6,300 feet above sea-level. Mahangthei, *Forty Years in Manipur...*, 12 & 81.

¹⁷³ Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 25-26.

the missionary and the converts formally organized the Ukhrul Church (Phungyo Baptist Church), the first Church in Manipur.¹⁷⁴ In 1907 it had 70 members. Since the growth was too rapid and most of the converts were unable to maintain the standards of Christian life, in 1908 Pettigrew drew up a list of rules that Christians would henceforth be expected to follow. Most of the church members refused to accept the rules with the result the missionary and the seven faithful members withdraw to organize a new church. By January 1910 membership increased to 14, and by 1911 there were 28 members in the new Church.¹⁷⁵

Later, Pettigrew's school at Ukhrul attracted students from all corners of the state. Besides the local Tangkhul; Thadous, Koms, Hmars, Zous and Anals came to join the school in 1908.¹⁷⁶ In 1912 nine students, the first Christians among the Thadou-Kuki in Manipur were baptized.¹⁷⁷

2.2.2.2 Establishment of Keisamthong Baptist Church

Although the mission centre was in the hill, Pettigrew did not neglect the evangelistic work in the plain. Moreover Pettigrew was made Honorary Inspector of Schools for the entire state, and many schools already been established in the valley, the missionary visits these schools three times in a year.¹⁷⁸ Grabbing this opportunity, Pettigrew tried to win the plain people to Christ. Thus the second Baptist Church in Manipur was established at Keisamthong (Imphal) in early 1916 with 18 members including Gorkha, Meiteis, Nagas and Kukis.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ *The Assam Mission of the AMBU: Report, 1899, 52.*

¹⁷⁵ The seven faithful members are: Hollei, Leishisan, MK Shimry, T. Luikham of Ukhrul, Kuishon and Machonthei Kampha, and A. Paromsingh of Pheiying - the first Meitei Christian who was converted in April, 1903). Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 68, cf. Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 29.

¹⁷⁶ 1908 is the year Ngulhao Thomsong, the first Thadou Christian was baptized at Kohima.

¹⁷⁷ Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 68. Their names are: Teba Kilong, Longkhobel Kilong, Seilut Singson, Jamkithang Sitlhou, Tongngul Gangte, Helkhup Chongloi, Pakho Sitlhou, Thangneilal and Dengkho. *K.B.C Thusim*, (Imphal: KBC Press, 1987), 3; cf. George T. Haokip, *Beginning of Christianity in Manipur: A Historical Approach* (<http://kukiforum.com/2009/02/beginning-of-christianity-in-manipur-a-historical-approach/>, published on 15, 2009, accessed on 15/1/2016), 1. – George is a Ph.D. research scholar in Manipur University.

¹⁷⁸ Mahangthei, *Forty Years in Manipur...*, 15.

¹⁷⁹ Lolly, *The Baptist Church in Manipur...*, 39.

2.2.2.3 Establishment of Tujangvaichong Baptist Church

Though Keisamthong Baptist Church is recorded as the second Baptist Church in Manipur by many historians, Tujangvaichong actually is the second Baptist Church in Manipur after Phungyo Baptist Church (1902), and the first among the Thadous. U.M. Fox¹⁸⁰ pronounced the establishment of the Church on 12 December, 1914 at Karong. Tujangvaichong Baptist Church was regarded as the third Church because Pettigrew formally organized it in 1916. He organized it later because he was on his second furlough (September, 1912 – February, 1915), when the Church was declared by U.M. Fox.

Tujangvaichong Church was established largely through the work of Ngulhao Thomsong who came there in 1910 from Nagaland.¹⁸¹ The first baptisms were conducted by U.M. Fox in 12 December, 1914, while on his way from Imphal to Kohima for furlough, at Karong River, since he had no time to go up to their village. Twelve people¹⁸² got baptism on that day. On that very day U.M. Fox declared the Tujangvaichong Church established and also consecrated Lhingkhosei and Let-am (Letngam/Letlam) as pastor and deacon respectively at the wishes of the members.

The following day, Fox baptized another ten people¹⁸³ of the same village who came late on the previous day but wished to be baptized by the missionary, at Maram. Thus, with these 22

¹⁸⁰ Rev. U.M. Fox work in Manipur only for about four years while Pettigrew was on leave. During his short stay he did tremendous job particularly for westward expansion of mission. Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 31.

¹⁸¹ He is said to have converted 85 persons in the village including the chief, and 70 other from neighbouring village. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 141.

¹⁸² Pu Demkhohen Kipgen, Pu Paokhojang Kipgen, Pu Chongjangam Kipgen, Pu Thangkholeng Kipgen, Pu Sonkholet, Pu Sodem, Pi Nguljaphal, Pi Tingjanem, Pi Lhuphal, Pi Kimlhai, Pi Vahjalhai and Pu Songjapao Kipgen, chief of the village. Paokhohao Haokip, ed. "Pu UM Fox" *Kuki Baptist Centenary, 2014, Souvenir*, (Imphal: Souvenir Committee Centenary Celebration, 2014).

¹⁸³ Pu Demkholun Kipgen, Pu Jamkhosei Kipgen, Pu Khupjasei, Pu Chongjalun, Pu Seikhothang Kipgen, Pi Chongvah, Pi Phalneng, Pi Lhingkhosei, Pi Hoithem and Pi Hatchin. Paokhohao Haokip, ed. "Pu UM Fox...

baptized Christians and three couple¹⁸⁴ who already got baptized on August 30, 1914 by the hand of U.M. Fox at Ukhrul, the first Baptist Church among the Thadou in Manipur came into existence at Tujangvaichong Village.¹⁸⁵

2.2.2.4 Expansion of Churches among the Thadous

Beside Tujangvaichong, the mission expanded to other Thadou villages. The next church was Langkhong situated about 50 miles due west of Imphal, where a small primary school was opened during 1914-1915.¹⁸⁶ Longkhobel, another evangelist took care of the converts in Langkhong. There were thirty-two young members in 1917, and they existed as a branch of the Imphal Church.¹⁸⁷

The other Church was at Shenbangyang, about 30 miles south-west of Imphal. The entire village became Christian and there were 21 baptize member in 1917. Owing to the difficulty of missionary visit a formal church could not be organized and therefore was made a branch Church of the Imphal Church. Theba, a former student of Ukhrul was appointed to take care of the converts in Shenbangyang village.¹⁸⁸

Other Tujangvaichong branch Churches are Tongkoi and Chaljang in 1919, Karakhun, Songphel Khulen, Gelnel, Kachai Kuki all in 1920, and Lhongchin in 1922.¹⁸⁹

2.2.3 Establishment of Kangpokpi Mission Headquarter

¹⁸⁴ Pu Lhingkhosei Kipgen and his wife Pi Chonghoi, Pu Let-am Kipgen and his wife Pi Chinthem and Pu Vumjaseh and Pi Phakim. Kim Vaiphei, *Manipur gamma Christian Hou Hunglut chuleh Kikite lah'a Pathen Hou Kipat Thusim* (Kangpokpi: Author, 1999), 24.

¹⁸⁵ S. Singson and Hawlngam Haokip, "KBC Thusim", *Kuki Baptist Convention Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 2008* (Imphal: Souvenir Committee, 2008), 9; cf. *KBC Thusim...*, 8; Vaiphei, *Manipur gamma Christian...*, 24; Haokip, *Overcoming Church division...* 3.

¹⁸⁶ Milton S Sangma, *History of American Baptist Mission in North-East India Volume- Two* (New Delhi: Mittal Publication, 1992), 238.

¹⁸⁷ Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur...*, 56.

¹⁸⁸ Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur...*, 56-57, cf. Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 34.

¹⁸⁹ Haokip, *Overcoming Church division in Manipur...*, 3.

With the expansion of mission at Imphal and among the Thadou in the western hills, launching of missionary activities from Ukhrul, which is situated on the extreme eastern corner of Manipur faced difficulties. Therefore, the Mission Society appeals the Government for permission to shift its mission headquarter to Imphal, if possible, or to somewhere nearby which would provide more convenience for communication in all respects of its mission activities.¹⁹⁰

In the meantime a great revolution called *Thadou Gal*¹⁹¹ (1917-1919) broke out in Manipur and surrounding. Thus, for the sake of the suffering masses during the war the Mission conference in January 1918 transferred Galen Greenfield Crozier, MD, and his wife from Tura to Manipur to meet the medical needs in this area.¹⁹² Crozier served as special medical officer for the Kangpokpi Mission till June 1919.¹⁹³ Downs wrote, “Crozier served as a Government medical officer during the Anglo-Thadou war. Thus in appreciation for services rendered, the mission was finally given permission to purchase land for a new centre at

¹⁹⁰ Lolly, *The Baptist Church in Manipur...*, 51.

¹⁹¹ Thadou Gal (Anglo-Thadou War) also known as Kuki Rebellion, started on March, 1917 and ended on 20th May, 1919. A summon was issued to the Kuki chiefs in March 1917, to contribute recruits to serve in a labour corps destined for France, which His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur had undertaken to raise. The Thadou tribesmen, led by Longja village, revolted against the British. This was the longest, largest, costliest military operation in the whole of India since the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. It took exactly 2000 fully armed soldiers, later on reinforced by over 5000 soldiers including Burma military armed police, took two full years, which was an eternity for the mighty Britishers vis-a-vis the size and status of the enemy, to subdue about 2000 Thadou militiamen with just about 1500 one-shot muskets and a 100 or so mountain guns but without adequate gunpowder and extra parts.

The losses received by the British army in India were: Two British officers killed, five wounded; two Indian officers killed, two wounded; 30 British sepoys killed, 100 wounded; 34 Indian sepoys killed, and 47 wounded. The total number of those British soldiers who died due to wounds, injuries and other diseases were officially recorded as 477. The Government troops in Burma: one British officer, and 38 sepoys were kill in action; and Four British Officers and 99 sepoys were wounded.

On the side of the Thadou, Ngulkhup, chief of Longya was killed in action, and other chiefs were captured or surrender. More than 20 chiefs captured or surrendered from India and Burma were imprison in India (Andaman) and in Burma, and others were put at hard labour in concentration camps. 86 Thadou villages were burn down, 112 villages surrender, 15 villages had been forsaken. The British spend 18 lakhs during the war. It was during the Thadou war the 303 Rifles was first used by the Assam Rifles. Khotinthang Kipgen, *Thadou Gal* (Imphal: Thangkhochoh, 1970), 45-49; cf. Sitlhou, *Thadou Kuki Christianite Thusim...*, 23. Donn Morgan Kipgen, *The Great Kuki Rebellion of 1917-1919: Its Real Significances* (http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=manipur.History_of_Manipur.The_great_Kuki_rebellion_of_1917-19, (Accessed on 2-2-2016); KNF, *Kukiland...*, 82; Singh, *History of the Christian Mission in Manipur...*, 156-160.

¹⁹² Haokip, “Kuki Churches Unification Movements...”, 34.

¹⁹³ Paokhohao Haokip, ed, “Pu Pu Dr. G.G. Crozier” *Kuki Baptist Centenary, 2014, Souvenir*, (Imphal: Souvenir Committee Centenary Celebration, 2014).

Kangpokpi on the Imphal-Kohima road.”¹⁹⁴ Thus, in October 1919, the Political Agent decided the site for the Mission headquarters at Kangpokpi, a Thadou village, which is three Kms North of National highway 39 and 45 kms off Imphal. The area measures 204.5 acres.¹⁹⁵

Pettigrew left for furlough at the end of 1919 and Crozier moved into the site at Kangpokpi on November, 1919. The same year clearing the jungle, building houses for themselves, school, hostel, dispensary, Sunday school etc. was started under the direction of Seilut Singson, a Thadou Christian. Crozier starts the leper asylum (the first of its kind in Manipur), and dispensary on November 7, 1919.¹⁹⁶ He also established an orphanage, and Kangpokpi Mission School was started on December 9, 1919. A. Porom Singh, former Head Master of Ukhrul served as the Head Master of the Kangpokpi Mission School.¹⁹⁷ Crozier was joined by Pettigrew on January 21, 1921.¹⁹⁸

Today the Kangpokpi Mission Centre has a Christian Hospital (the first Christian Hospital in the state), Nursing Training Centre, The Manipur Theological College offering Bachelor of Divinity (BD) and Kangpokpi Mission High School (MBC Institutions). However, the Lepers Colony is no more in existence today. Although the Mission headquarter was shifted to Kangpokpi on 1919, Ukhrul was maintained as a sub-station and the Middle English School received mission support.

The opening of Mission Headquarters at Kangpokpi saw a great growth every year in the number of converts from the villages. Shortly after the First World War significant numbers of tribal in Manipur began turning to Christianity. C.B. Firth writes,

The main reason was the Kuki Rebellion (*Thadou Gal*) of 1917-1919 in Manipur. The Thadou tribesmen, led by Longja village, revolted against the British when

¹⁹⁴ Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 136.

¹⁹⁵ Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*,35.

¹⁹⁶ Vaiphei, ed, *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 4.

¹⁹⁷ Lolly, *The Baptist Church in Manipur...*, 53.

¹⁹⁸ Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*,36.

the latter attempted to force them to send conscripts for service in the Labour Corps being raised for the war service. The Thadou bitterly resented the support given the British by the Christian Nagas of Manipur. But once having been defeated they turned to Christianity in large numbers.¹⁹⁹

Downs added,

The defeat of the rebel was more than a defeat at arms. It was a defeat of the old way of life. One result was that large numbers of Thadou began to turn towards Christianity.²⁰⁰

A movement to Christianity which had begun in 1921 was given added impetus by the Manipur Revival of 1923-24. This revival had been carried to Manipur from neighbouring Mizoram and had great impact on both Naga and Kuki.²⁰¹ According to the census, there were 132 Christian in Manipur in 1911, 4050 in 1921, 3000 communicant members in 24 Churches in 1922, 10,401 in 1931 and 68,394 in 1951. In 1940-41 there were at least 660 baptized members of the Thadou Churches and by 1945 there were 3,000 baptized believers.²⁰²

The two missionary families worked together for sometimes, but personal and theological differences led them to divided Manipur into two “Spheres of influence”. Pettigrew supervised educational ministry and the North East and Sadar (North of Imphal up to the Nagaland border) regions mainly comprised of Nagas (Pettigrew master the Tangkhul language), whereas Crozier supervised the medical works and the North West region comprised most of the Thadous (Crozier master the Thadou language).²⁰³ Crozier resigned in 1932 and his work was continued by John Anderson basing himself in Kangpokpi.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ C.B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1961 [2013]), 266.

²⁰⁰ Downs, *History of Christianity in India...*, 143.

²⁰¹ Downs, *History of Christianity in India...*, 110.

²⁰² S. Prim Vaiphei, *Church Growth Among the Hill Tribes of Manipur North East India* (Imphal: Goodwill Press, 1986), 56.

²⁰³ Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 134.

²⁰⁴ Haokip, “Kuki Churches Unification Movements...”, 35.

2.3 THADO KUKI PIONEER MISSION

The origin of Christianity in the southwest Manipur begins with a lay missionary named Watkin Robert Roberts from Caernarvon, Wales, who had come to help P. Fraser a Missionary at Aizawl, Mizoram, a medical dispenser. Robert left his hometown, his slate mining business and the comfort of western life on October 14, 1908 to begin his missionary adventure because of a deep passion to save at least one Indian Soul, and reach Aizawl on December 9, 1908.²⁰⁵

2.3.1 Establishment of Mission Field in Southwest Manipur

During his stay in Aizawl, Roberts learnt the Lushai (Mizo) language through his interpreters and made special efforts to befriend local people. Seeing the large un-evangelized regions and the urgent need of saving hundreds souls, he developed a vision to send a copy of Gospel of John to all the tribal chiefs within the Mizo Hills and its adjoining villages. Thus Watkin Robert brought over 104 copies of Gospel of St. John which was written in Lushai²⁰⁶ and sends it through some student who were studying at Aizawl.²⁰⁷

2.3.1.1 Macedonian Call

The efforts of Watkin Robert soon bear fruit. A positive reply came from Kamkholun Singson, chief of Senvon village²⁰⁸ with an appeal written in broken Lushai language on the flyleaf of the same Gospel which Roberts had personally sent to Manipur. The appeal said, “Sir, come yourself, and tells us about the book and your God.” It was a Macedonian call for Roberts. Without any delay, he made up his mind to take the long, hazardous journey over the

²⁰⁵ Jonathan Pudaite, *The Legacy of Watkin R. Roberts: A Pioneer Missionary who Advocated & Empowered Indigenous Christian Leader* (Shillong: Partnership Publishing House, 2009), 1, 14.

²⁰⁶ Translated into Mizo by Savidge and J.H. Lorrain, the Arthington missionaries in Mizoram.

²⁰⁷ Kipgen, “The Thadou Kuki Christian Mission...”, 32.

²⁰⁸ Kamkholun was the same chief who had earlier refused entry to the Baptist missionary William Pettigrew.

rugged hill into Senvon to concede to this touching request from the depth of the people's heart.²⁰⁹ Roberts with Lungpau Vaiphei and Thangkhai Vaiphei²¹⁰ with some local porters lost no time in preparing for the journey.

By January 31, 1910 Roberts and his party left Aizawl. According to Rochunga Pudaite, as narrated to him by Watkin Roberts, the parties arrived at Senvon early in the afternoon of February 9, 1910.²¹¹ As soon as they reached there, Roberts preached the Gospel to them and visited the neighbouring villages preaching the good news. Five young men²¹² – Thangur, Thangneiram, Kaithang, Pauva and H. Chawnga, opened their hearts to Jesus. On their way back to Aizawl, two of his tour guides Thangkai and Lungpau accepted the Lord at a Hmar village in Lushai Hills.²¹³

Since then regular meetings were held day and night at Senvon. People from the neighbouring villages also came to hear the word of God with deep interest. Thus, the church was established at Senvon in 1910, which was the first Thadou Christian Church in Manipur followed by Leisen, Khopibung, Malte, Bualtong and Chawngkhozo.²¹⁴

2.3.1.2 Establishment of Senvon Mission Centre

As per the request of the chief Kamkholun to establish a school at Senvon, upon arriving Aizawl, Robert challenged the student at the Welsh Mission to be a missionary to Manipur. Three students namely Savawma, Vanzika and Thangchhingpuia (also called Taitea) volunteer to go to the new land. The trio were the first recruits of a passion ignited by Roberts

²⁰⁹ Pudaite, *The Legacy of Watkin R. Roberts...*, 47-52.

²¹⁰ Lungpau and Thangkhai who were then studying at Aizawl under the sponsorship of P. Fraser were a student from Manipur. Roberts selected them because they were well familiar with the hills and topography of the land between Manipur and Mizoram.

²¹¹ Thongkhosei writes that the parties arrived at Senvon on 5th February 1910. (According to Pudaite, they actually propose to reach Senvon by 5, but they were unable to make it). Haokip, *Overcoming Church division...* 5.

²¹² Some writers included Kamkholun, the village chief, which make the number of the converts to six.

²¹³ Pudaite, *The Legacy of Watkin R. Roberts...*, 54-57.

²¹⁴ Haokip, *Overcoming Church division...* 5.

to move out of Mizo Hills to work as an evangelist-teacher. Since there was no organization to back them up, Roberts assure them to help them by sending a small amount of about Rs. 5/- between the three, each month.²¹⁵ The trio left Aizawl following the same path they had follow on the previous journey with Roberts and reach Senvon on May 7, 1910. Since May 7 was the day the Missionaries reached Southern Manipur, the North East India General Mission Leaders Conference in 1960 declares May 7 to be observed as “Missionary Day” every year.²¹⁶

With the appointment of the three national workers, Senvon became the first mission centre. They soon started the construction of a bamboo walled and thatch roofed school on a small piece of land given by the chief, and pasted the picture of crucified Jesus in the wall of their house and in the porch and immediately start preaching the gospel.²¹⁷ Though it was a big challenge for the three to draw students to stay at the village to study forsaking their daily work in jhum, through their tireless efforts, the area was gradually exposed to the Gospel and followers were soon found. In spite of opposition from parents; many were added to Christian faith. Fraser proudly included this good news in his medical Missionary reports of 1910.²¹⁸

Roberts felt the importance of sending reinforcements to help with the evangelistic work. Thus, he transferred Lungpau, Nekpum and Luahhanga who were studying at the Welsh Mission School in Aizawl to Senvon, to continue their education.²¹⁹ He also appointed Thangkhai as an evangelist teacher on March 1, 1911. Teachers and students were actively

²¹⁵ Pudaite, *The Legacy of Watkin R. Roberts...*, 58.

²¹⁶ D. Jangkholam, “Kukite le Manipur Gamsunga Pathen Thu Machaldan,” *The 6th ECA Mission Conference, 2010: Southern Manipur Gospel Centenary Celebration (1910-2010) Souvenir*, edited by Jamkhogin Lhungdim (Churachandpur: Evangelical Churches Association, 2010), 5.

²¹⁷ Thangkholal Singson, *Houbung Kalsuon – Journey of the Church* (Imphal: Author, 2015), 7.

²¹⁸ A few days ago, the joyful news came that in the village where they have commenced work, six persons has decided to become Christians. A Chapel has also been built. There is much reason to thank God that a little church now exists among a tribe of people who until last year, were in darkness and in shadow of death. *Report of the Foreign Mission of Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram from 1910* (Aizawl: The Synod literature and Publ. Boards, 1997), 45.

²¹⁹ Th. Lamboi Vaiphei, *The Advent of Christian Mission and Its Impact on the Hill-Tribes in Manipur* (Imphal: Frontier Mission Society, 1997), 98.

involved in preaching the Gospel in the surrounding villages on weekends. Believers grew in numbers and several bamboo chapels were erected in the nearby villages.²²⁰

2.3.2 Formation of the Thadou-Kuki Pioneer Mission (TKPM)

Lack of funds to support mushrooming pioneer mission and the unconditional support rendered by his workers necessitated Roberts to find means to continue the work. In the meantime, Roberts felt the urgency of forming some organization to care for the national workers and the newly established church and for any possible development. Thus, at the end of 1912 he went to England. After having consultation with his friends, an interdenominational faith mission was formed with a name “Thado-Kuki Pioneer Mission” to support the pioneer work.²²¹ D. Lloyd Jonse from North Wales was appointed the first secretary with Arnold Davies Esq. and C.W. Dobson as the treasurers for North Wales and London respectively. He then made onto promotional work by journeying around England along with Dala. He also made a trip to America, accompanied by David Lloyd Jones to raise support among the Welsh American.²²²

2.3.2.1 Conflict with the American Baptist Mission

The Regulation of 1880, gave concentrated power in the hands of a single deputy commissioner in charge of each hill district, and as a general rule the government adopted a policy of allowing only one mission to work in each hill district.²²³ Since Manipur was

²²⁰ Pudaite, *The Legacy of Watkin R. Roberts...*, 60.

²²¹ The mission was so named because the western writers who provide the earliest written information about the people identify them as Thadou-Kuki tribes. The Thado are the largest tribes within the Kuki, although, as with any other ethnic identity, the boundary of the group cannot be precisely ascertained. The Thado developed and, like the Lusei in the Lushai hills of Mizoram to the south, became influential in the region; the Thado language was spoken by others, including some Nagas to the north. Possibly it was for this reason that the hyphenated term *Thado-Kuki* was used, but the scope of the mission included all the *Kuki* tribes. Jangkholam Haokip, “Implications of having an Independent Massionary: A Review of the 1910 *Kuki* Mission” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* Vol. 38/2 (April 2014), 91.

²²² Pudaite, *The Legacy of Watkin R. Roberts...*, 65.

²²³ K.M. George, *Christianity in India Through the Centuries* (Secunderabad: Authentic Books, 2013), 156.

recognized as an American Baptist Mission comity area, the three missionary that entered Senvon in 1910 and Dala in 1913 were order to leave by Political Agent. This action was taken at the request of Pettigrew.²²⁴

In 1914, J.C. Haggins, the President of Manipur Darbar ordered that the new mission workers should immediately leave Manipur as no mission other than the American Baptists would be tolerated.²²⁵ Having notice the continued operation of the pioneer mission work, Haggins again issued an order summoning Dala to appear before the Political Agent on 1915. Thus, Dala left for Imphal, taking Savawma, Lungpau, Thangkai and Enzasiak with him.²²⁶ However it was a great advantage for Dala and his friends that Cole, who helped Roberts to procure temporary permission to cross the border on his visit to Senvon in 1910, had been promoted to the rank of Colonel and was posted in Manipur as the Political Agent. Dala pleaded that they should be allowed to work under the mission founded by Roberts. Thereupon, permission was granted and provisional boundaries was allotted for TKPM to work with full liberty in the lower Kailam (mountain) range, but with restriction to preach anymore in the upper Kailam range except Bualtang, Chongkhizou, Gelmoul, Ngurte, Khawpuibung, Maite, Thangkangphai and Tlanbung village which is in upper Kailam.²²⁷

2.3.2.2 Fund Rising Strategy of the Thado-Kuki Pioneer Mission

Roberts made a box out of steel with six corners and did his fund drive for the TKPM workers in the west. In the first corner it was written “Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17). In the second corner was written “Thado-Kuki Pioneer Mission” and paste a photo of a

²²⁴ Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 140. Previously, in March 1912, Pettigrew, along with Theba Kilong and Longkhobel Kilong visit southwest Manipur and reached as far as Senvon to investigate mission started by Roberts. They visited almost all the important villages like Lailong, Saichang, Parbung, Senvon, Pherzawl, Chongkhzo and other. There Pettigrew came to know that Mr. Roberts had sent five native preachers in the Manipur territory. Y.K. Shimray, “William Pettigrew and the Hill People,” *Rev. William Pettigrew: A Pioneer Missionary of Manipur* (Imphal: Fraternal Green Cross, 1996), 16.

²²⁵ Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 166.

²²⁶ Vaiphei, *The Advent of Christian Mission...*, 104-105.

²²⁷ Pudaite, *The Legacy of Watkin R. Roberts...*, 70.

Thadou-Kuki heathen priest.²²⁸ In the third corner was written “Carest thou that we parish?” In the fourth corner was a picture of Vanzika, Savawma and Taitea. In the fifth corner was written “9 pounds will support an Indian missionary for 12 months, 2 pounds will support a Christian student for 12 months, 10 pounds will supply 500 copies of Bible for distribution among non Christian in Manipur and elsewhere, ‘Lord, what will thou have me to do?’ Whatever he said unto you do it.” And in the sixth corner was the picture of Thado-Kuki Pioneer Mission Lushai workers starting on a long journey of over 100 miles to commence new work among the Thadou-Kuki, in Manipur.²²⁹ The successful trip to the States helps Roberts to consolidate the independent faith mission.

2.3.2.3 Mission Strategy of the Thado-Kuki Pioneer Mission

Robert was fully convinced that “nationals telling nationals is the best and the most effective means of evangelism.”²³⁰ The Christian in the southwest Manipur did not have a white missionary permanently stationed in the land. It is an indigenous Church on a self-governing and self-propagating basis.

Leadership vested on the local people, who were at home with the area and knew the people, was the secret of Roberts’ missions’ successes.²³¹ Seeing that, “leadership from outside a community cannot bring much momentum to a growing movement”²³², in order to organize TKPM, Roberts appointed R. Dala as the first field superintendent with Senvon as its base in 1913. Within a short time, the mission spread to over about twenty villages and the membership of the church grew in number.

²²⁸ The photo was taken as the priest was returning in a helpless drunken state from a feast and sacrifice to evil spirit, most of the villagers have several of these priests but no Christian teacher to tell them of Calvary.

²²⁹ Singson, *Houbung Kalsuon...*, 9-10.

²³⁰ Pudaite, *The Legacy of Watkin R. Roberts...*, 58.

²³¹ Pudaite, *The Legacy of Watkin R. Roberts...*, 67.

²³² Vasantharay Albert, “Christianity among the Mahars of Maharashtra” edited by F. Hrangkhuma, *Christianity in India: Search for Liberation and Identity* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1998,) 103.

Another significant development during this period was the opening of the school of evangelism, apart from the mission school.²³³ Roberts and Dala appoint twenty local missionaries with a salary of Rs. 6/- per month. They were called Teacher-Evangelist, and where ever they are they established school and do the teaching and preaching together.²³⁴

Dala also soon established two separate departments under TKPM – The Evangelism department and the Education department. This enabled the national workers to stay focused in the area of the work. Thus, the new faith spread like wild fire through TKPM starting from Senvon, and in no time the whole of South Manipur got the light of the gospel mainly through the new converts.

2.3.2.4 Development of Thado-Kuki Pioneer Mission

TKPM already had more than 200 members in 1913. When the number of Christian reach more than 2000 in the year 1914, on December 26, 1914, the first Conference of Christian in southwest Manipur called *Pheipui Biel Presbytery* was convened at Senvon, under the Chairmanship of Dala and Teisena as Secretary.²³⁵ The meeting passed 25 resolutions under the guidance of Roberts.²³⁶

In March, 1921, the second annual conference was held at Maite the conference had record of Rs. 1072 towards tithes and R. Dala the field superintendent reports the detail number of Christian in different tribes as shown in bellows: Hmar - 1374, Vaiphei - 248, *Thadou* - 135,

²³³ Lal Dena, "A Century of Christianity in Southern Manipur: Towards its Indigenisation," *Journal of North East India Studies*, (2004), 10-11. (9-15)

²³⁴ The name of the missionaries and the place of their work are as follows: Savawma (Senvon), Lungpao (Maite), Thuomlun (Phaijol), Lunthang (Chongkhojou), Damsuoka (Sartuinek), Thangjakhup (Teikhang), Khawjathang (Hmunte), Tawna (Khopibung), Taite (Leisen), Dengruma (Munte), Luoia (Parbung), Thangkai (Boultang), Vunga (Khopibung), Manghen (Saichang), Kunga (Parbung), Thangchhingpui (Khopibung), Paosum (Songkot), Taisena (Senvon), Khuma (Tuisen) and H.Chwanga (Leisen). Singson, *Houbung Kalsuon...*, 8-9.

²³⁵ Jangkholam, "*Kukite le Manipur Gamsunga...*", 5.

²³⁶ The most noteworthy were: workers should make an evangelistic tour of the area for six month in a year without any particular area; workers should maintain a Diary of their daily activities and report act to the mission headquarter; the worker should learn the language of the area assigned to them. For all the Resolution see Singson, *Houbung Kalsuon...*, 10-11.

Pawi - 20, Gangte - 248, Paite - 121, Lushei - 116, Ralte - 10. One of the greatest missionary worked happened in the Mizo-Hmar tribe, all the Hmars were converted into Christianity within thirty years.²³⁷

Another important creative and innovative approach adopted by Roberts through TKPM was opening an Evangelistic Training School at Senvon in 1916.²³⁸ At this initial stage, the evangelist as well as the people had a very little knowledge of the Bible. The Bible school was open under the supervision of Dala, who completed his short-term training in England.²³⁹

2.3.3 Rechristening of TKPM

Beginning from 1917, the TKPM shows unprecedented geographical growth outside Manipur. With the expansion of Christianity from southwest Manipur to Assam, Tripura, Burma (Myanmar), and Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, Roberts felt the need to change the mission's name to a more inclusive or broader one to cover the whole area of operation. Roberts sent his proposal in 1923 for discussion at the Annual Christian Conference. The matter was discussed at the Annual Conference of Phaipui Bial Presbytery held at Tinsuong. The Presbytery unanimously approved the proposal and changed the name of the mission from Thado-Kuki Pioneer Mission (TKPM) to North East India General Mission (NEIGM). With the expansion of the mission, Mission headquarter is also shifted from Senvon to

²³⁷ Semion Hmar, *Christianity in Manipur...*,3.

²³⁸ When the Mission headquarter was shifted to Lakhipur (Cachar), Assam in 1922, the school was also relocated there. Later in 1947, it was relocated again in Kangvai, Churachandpur.

²³⁹ The school aimed at imparting important theological truths to the student; to mobilize the ordinary lay people; and to encourage emerging leaders to carry on the evangelistic task of the church. The subject includes: The Book of 1 Corinthians, The Book of Romans, World-History-I, How to lead a person to Jesus Christ, the meaning of sin, faith, grace, God's love, death and resurrection of Christ, the imminent of second coming of Jesus etc. Pudaite, *The Legacy of Watkin R. Roberts...*, 71-72.

Tinsong in 1920, From Tinsong to Lakhipur, Cachar (Assam) in 1922, from Lakhipur to Mission Compound in 1930, and from there to Churachandpur town in 1984.²⁴⁰

2.4 LOCAL BAPTIST MISSIONARIES

F.S. Downs states, “The rapid growth of Christianity in Manipur certainly cannot be attributed to large scale foreign missionary operations. As elsewhere in the North East, Christianity was propagated by the people of the area.”²⁴¹ Just as Roberts was a visionary leader who appointed the indigenous missionaries to work among the indigenous tribes and was fruitful in southwest Manipur; Pettigrew, being a man of God with a vision foresee the great task of evangelization among the hill tribes and knew that it would be an impossible, beyond his own capacity to do it alone. He, therefore prayerfully and prudently selected several native leaders to help him evangelized the people. Among the many leaders,²⁴² mention may be made of some outstanding Thadou Missionaries.

2.4.1 Ngulhao Thomsong

Ngulhao Thomsong was the son of So-ot and Lhingjanem. He was born at Tening (Henima), Naga Hills (Nagaland). His parents pass away when he was just seven years old. In 1900, he was sent to Mission School, Kohima. In 1906, Rivenburg sends him to Christian High School in Jorhat, Assam. During his stay at Jorhat, he received the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal saviour and learn much about Gospel. On January, 20, 1908²⁴³, he was baptized by Rivenburg. He was the first person to be converted and baptized among the Thadou people. Then he became an evangelist, preaching and spreading the gospel to different people in

²⁴⁰ Pudaite, *The Legacy of Watkin R. Roberts...*, 83, cf. Jangkholam, “*Kukite le Manipur Gamsunga...*”, 5. NEIGM was again change as Evangelical Congregational Church of India (ECCI) on September 23-26, 1985 at the Evangelical Church General Conference Emmaus, Pennsylvania.

²⁴¹ Downs, *History of Christianity in India...*, 111.

²⁴² Such as Theba Kilong, Longkhobel Kilong, Tongkhopao Vaiphei, Tongkhojang Lunkim, Satkhosei, Hawngam, D. Singson, Doujapao, Khupsei Misao, Letjavum Sitlou and his wife Jampineng, S.L. Lunneh, Jangthang Kipgen, Thangpu Kipgen, Satjasei Lhouvum, Sokhup Lhouvum, Lalkhosei Kipgen, Lunhen Misao, etc.

²⁴³ Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 122.

Nagaland. In 1912, Ngulhao with Nguljahren Singson established Sirhima Baptist Church, the first Thadou Baptist Church in Nagaland.²⁴⁴

When U.M. Fox heard about Ngulhao and his work, he invited Ngulhao to work with him at Ukhrul. Ngulhao served as a school teacher in Ukhrul and work with U.M. Fox from 1911 till 1913.²⁴⁵ The first Thadou Baptist Church that was established in 1914 was largely through the work of Ngulhao Thomsong who came there in 1910. He is said to have converted 85 persons in this village including the Chief, Songjapao Kipgen, and 70 others from neighbouring villages.²⁴⁶ He mobilised as many as 500 non-Christian Thadous for the First labour Corps, and he himself went to France to be an interpreter during the First World War. There he met the king of England, and the latter presented him one English Holy Bible.²⁴⁷

After his return from France and two years of Government service, he served as a voluntary evangelist among the Anals. During three years among them, 334 Anals were converted to Christianity.²⁴⁸

Ngulhao was the pioneer of Thadou Literature. In 1922, he compiled the Thadou hymn book with the help of Pettigrew as Editor. In 1926 he started Thadou Literature work. Catechism and Thadou Primer were two major work of Ngulhao which were published in 1927 and 1929 respectively.²⁴⁹ As invited by Crozier for the translation of the Bible into Thadou language, Ngulhao came to Kangpokpi in 1926. With the help of Mrs. Crozier, who is well verse with Latin, Greek and Hebrew, he started translation of the New Testament Bible into Thadou,

²⁴⁴ Paokhohao Haokip, ed, "Pu Ngulhao Thomsong" *Kuki Baptist Centenary, 2014, Souvenir*, (Imphal: Souvenir Committee Centenary Celebration, 2014).

²⁴⁵ Vumthang Sitlhou, *Thadou Kuki Christianite Thusim Chomcha* (Motbung: Thadou Christian Centenary Committee, 2008), 66.

²⁴⁶ Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 141.

²⁴⁷ Sitlhou, *Thadou Kuki Christianite Thusim Chomcha...*, 66.

²⁴⁸ Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 141.

²⁴⁹ Paocha Lhouvum, ed, "A Brief History of Pu Ngulhao Thomsong," *Thadou Christian Centenary, 2008 Souvenir*, (Motbung: Editorial Board Souvenir, Thadou Christian Centenary, 2008), 8.

which was published in 1942. He also started translating the Old Testament, but could only complete a major part of the Pentateuch.²⁵⁰

Ngulhao Thomsong has a gift of ability to speak many languages. Beside Thadou, he was well versed in English, Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Chinese, Tripuri, Mizo, Angami, Burmese, Manipuri, Sema, Khasi, Kacha Naga (Zemi), and Gurkhali (Nepali).²⁵¹ He died in Songpijang village, North Cachar Hills (Assam) in 1945.

2.4.2 Helkhup Chongloi

Helkhup Chongloi, one among the first Christian in Manipur was the son of Vumjasong, chief of Makui Thadou (now Chaljang) village. He studied in Ukhrul during 1915-1920, and was baptized by Pettigrew. From 1922, he work as an evangelist in northwest (Tamenglong) of Manipur and use Tujangvaichong as his headquarter. Though he was not well educated, he discharged his responsibility out of truthfulness and hard work. Therefore he was trusted, loved and respected by everyone. Except for one or two Churches, most of the Churches in the northwest area were planted by Helkhup. He was Church planter evangelist as well as a Pastor. He was the first Superintendent Pastor among the Thadou. Not only among the Thadous, along with Dr. & Mrs. Crozier, Helkhup was one of the earliest evangelist among the Rongmei and Liangmei Nagas. He planted many Churches among them. On September 9, 1923, Helkhup organized a church at Sempang, the first among the Zeliangrong. He had a brilliant record of service throughout his life in the area and there was no one to replace him.

²⁵⁰ S. Singson, "Pu Late Ngulhao Thomsong Thusim," *55th Anniversary of the New Testament Bible in Thadou-Kuki 1942-1997, Souvenir*, edited by SN. Gangte (Motbung: Thadou Baptist Association, 1997), 9-10 cf. Vaiphei, ed, *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 14.

²⁵¹ Singson, "Pu Late Ngulhao Thomsong Thusim...", 12.

Thus, the Nagas of the northwest, especially the Kabui Nagas could not forget him so far. He died in the year 1931 at his home, Chaljang Village.²⁵²

2.4.3 Pakho Sitlhou

Pakho Sitlhou, also called Mangkhohao Sitlhou, was the eldest son of Kaipu and Lamphal Sitlhou, chief of Taloulong village. He studied at Ukhrul Mission School and was baptized by Pettigrew in December 12, 1913. He finished his education in Ukhrul in 1922. Pakho surrendered to the Lord and prayed at his deepest heart, "Lord, Here I am, send me." In 1923, Crozier appointed him to be an evangelist among the Zalengrong Naga in northern Manipur. He reached Keihao, Rongmei Naga village in March 31, 1924. The Christian in Keihao established a new village called Sempang, and Pakho used that village as his headquarter. Under his leadership, the first church in the area was established in Sempang. He also established a Upper Primary School in Sempang, and thus, Sempang village became both spiritual and education centre. Pakho loves the Rongmeis and thus the Rongmeis give their lovely daughter Namgakleu (whom he name Thangjalhai) to be his wife. He learn Rongmei language and shortly he was well versed with it. Pakho is the architect of Rongmei Literature. He compiled the first Rongmei Gospel song book called *Raguang Lu* (God's Song) by translated many songs from Thadou and other languages. These songs book is used till today. He also translated the four gospel of Thadou into Rongmei. God mightily use Pakho among the Rongmei to established many churches among them. Even the Tamenglong Church was established through the initiation and organisation of Pakho. He worked among the Rongmeis in Tamenglong for 15 years. On July 21 1939, he left Sempang and work among the Liangmei Naga and the Thadou in Tamenglong area and established many Churches. He made Lamlap village as his headquarter. Even in later days when the relations between Kukis and Nagas

²⁵² Sitlhou, *Thadou Kuki Christianite Thusim Chomcha...*, 68-69, cf. Alun Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu: KBC Diary* (Imphal: Semlun Haokip and Lhingcha Haokip, 1993 [2015]), 500-501. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 147-148; Vaiphei, ed, *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 18.

were not good, the Rongmeis freely acknowledged their debt to this faithful servant of God. After serving 25 years among the Zelengrong, he came back to his village Taloulong in 1947. He died on April 29, 1962.²⁵³

2.4.4 Tongkam Singsit

Tongkam Singsit was the first foreign missionary from among the Thadous. He was born in 1909 in Khopibung village, Tamenglong. He accepted Christ in 1920, and got baptism in the hand of Pettigrew at Kangpokpi Mission Centre. In 1921, he started pursuing education at Tongkoi village, and continued his education at Kangpokpi Mission School and finish upto Class VI. In 1932, the same year that the Tangkhuls had tried to begin work in Somra tract, he was sent to the Joujang area in Burma, in response to a request from Haokip Thadous living there, for a Christian teacher. During his three years there some 60 persons accepted Christ and were baptized. He kept on planting churches in Burma, and the first Association in Burma, “Upper Burma Kuki Baptist Association,” was founded by him. After returning from Burma in 1934, he worked as a teacher in Thawai village in Ukhrul district. He kept on spreading the seed of gospel in Thawai and many became Christian. As a result, the chief of the village turn him out from the village. He therefore returned to Motbung and become the first Pastor of Motbung Baptist Church. He kept on spreading the gospel until his last breath in May 5, 1958 at Motbung. Tongkam Singsit was replaced, in 1935, by Letjavum Sitlhou, who died in service there.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Sitlhou, *Thadou Kuki Christianite Thusim Chomcha...*, 69-71, cf. Alun Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu...*, 502; Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 143; Vaiphei, ed, *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 17-18.

²⁵⁴ Sitlhou, *Thadou Kuki Christianite Thusim Chomcha...*, 73-75, cf. Alun Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu...*, 500; Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 143-144.

2.4.5 S.L. Palal

S. L. Jamkholal, popularly known as Palal was the youngest among the four sons of Tongjaseh. He was born in 1912 at Maovom at a time when almost all the Thadous were yet to embrace Christianity. In 1927 he started his schooling at Laijang (Tamenglong). He pursued his further studies at Kangpokpi Mission School, Manipur and then shifted to Shillong. A part from his secular degree Palal joined in the Evangelical Teachers' Training at Jorhat Theological College to obtain extra qualifications, which he had his course completed in 1940.

In 1930 while he was still a student, he accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the first to become Christian in his family. Consequently in the year 1934, he was baptized at Tuilang River by Pastor Helkhup. He then took a great decision to work among the non-Christian tribal as a missionary and as a teacher. The combinations of these two things were the normal practice of the early Christian missionaries. After this he volunteered to work among the Zelengrong Nagas. He at first went to a village called Sempang among the Naga, where he began his work. From his early youth Palal felt that he was destined to become a lyricist or poet. During this time he not only composed but also collected a good number of gospel songs from different sources. Palal taught many of his composed hymns and lyrics to the Zelengrong people. His collected hymns and lyric numbered around 600. He is also the compiler of the well known Thadou song book called *Lathah Bu*.

Not only in composing and collecting various modern songs he also extended all possible help to Ngulhao Thomsong while he was busy in translating the Bible. Later he became the chief translator in the Thadou Holy Bible Reference Book. In the later part of his life he continued serving the Lord by becoming one of the Deacons at Kangpokpi Independent Baptist Church from 1968 till his death in September 14, 1994. Moments before his final journey of life, on

his dying bed he said, *Ka Pathen nangma kom kahung naije*, meaning “Nearer my God to Thee” and then breathed his last.²⁵⁵

2.4.6 Seikholet Singson

Seikholet Singson is the second son of Henjalal and Nemjakim. He was born in July 1924 at Thingdol/Pedi village in Naga Hills (Nagaland). He received his education at Kohima ME School. While he did his class VIII, the Second World War broke out in 1943, due to which he could not continue his studies. After receiving Jesus as his Lord and Saviour, he was baptized by Pastor Ngulpao at Tesangki River on April 4, 1935. He married in 1944 with Songkholing Changsan. In 1945, he worked as a teacher at Tesangki Government Lower Primary School.

Seikholet came to Manipur and worked as a teacher at Kangpokpi Mission School in 1946. He came to Bongmol village in 1948 and there he established a Church and became a Pastor of that Church. In 1948, when there was a division among the Kuki and Naga in North West Baptist Association, he was appointed by the leader to organized the churches to established Association, and indeed Kuki Christian Association, the first Association among the Kukis, was established through the initiation of Seikholet in 1950. He worked as the first Executive Secretary in Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) during 1955-1960. Under his leadership, the first Church in MBC Centre was established and was inaugurated by Dr. D.J. Duffy, Principal of Eastern Theological College (ECT) on April 13, 1958. On September 25, 1957, he was ordained by M.J. Chance and became the first Ordained Minister in Manipur. In 1958, he passed Serampore Matric in first class. During his long tenure of Christian leadership, he worked heart and soul with various great achievements for the church in Manipur in general

²⁵⁵ Sheikholet Kipgen, *Tribal Literature in Manipur: Growth And Development Of 'Thadou-Kuki'* (Imphal: Thadou-Kuki Literature Society, 2011), 39-40; cf. Sitlhou, *Thadou Kuki Christianite Thusim...*, 82-89.

and for the Thadous in particular. Rev. Seikholet Singson is now the “Octogenarian” of the *Thadou-Kuki* Baptist leaders in Manipur. He is still alive and healthy.²⁵⁶

Though it was the AAM, ABM and TKPM who brought Christianity to the Thadous, the total conversion of Thadous into Christian cannot be totally credited to them. It was through the utmost work of the local pioneer missionaries the Thadous are now cent percent Christian.

²⁵⁶ Paokhohao Haokip, ed, “Pu Rev. Seikholet Singson” *Kuki Baptist Centenary, 2014, Souvenir*, (Imphal: Souvenir Committee Centenary Celebration, 2014).

CHAPTER – 3

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE THADOU BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Thadou Baptist Association took around 60 years to evolve leading to its inception. Initially a single Association was form for the whole Christians in Manipur. Lo and steady more Associations came into being according to the tribes and languages. This chapter will deal about the origin and division of Associations among the Kukis; and the origin and development of Kuki Baptist Association which was rechristened as Thadou Baptist Association on September 30, 1971.

3.1 FORMATION OF ASSOCIATION IN MANIPUR

The first Baptist Church in Manipur, Phungyo (Ukhrul) Baptist Church was established in February, 1902. The Second Baptist Church in Tujangvaichong was on 12 December, 1914; the third Church in Keisamthong, early in 1916; the fourth and the fifth Church Langkhong and Shenbangyang was in 1916. With the establishment of more churches, the need for fellowship and uniformity of church organization arose.

3.1.1 Formation of Manipur Christian Association

Thirteen delegates from five churches of Manipur gathered at Ukhrul in November 1916 and formed the first Association of Manipur,²⁵⁷ and the first meeting of the Association was held at Ukhrul in 1917.²⁵⁸ According to Zeliang, the Association was called Manipur Christian Association. Thongkhosei added, “All the Baptist churches were organised into one Association called Manipur Christian Association (MCA).”²⁵⁹ The first Association consisted

²⁵⁷ W. Pettigrew, “Manipur” *ABFMS: ABMC Report*, 1917, 21-24.

²⁵⁸ Vaiphei, ed, *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 33, cf. Haokip, “KBC Thusim”..., 8.

²⁵⁹ Haokip, *Overcoming Church division in Manipur...*, 6.

of all the Christian in Manipur: Meitei, Kuki and Naga. Tujangvaichong Baptist Church hosted the second meeting in 1921.²⁶⁰

Re-organization was made in the organization in 1921 in order to cope with the great movement of Christianity. Therefore, under the guidance of Pettigrew, the Manipur Christian Association was divided into three areas (Associations). Perhaps, this was in the third annual Manipur Association which was attended by 555 Tangkhul Nagas, Thadou Kuki, and Anal Nagas.²⁶¹

3.1.1.1 North East Baptist Association

The first Association was called North East Baptist Association (NEBAM). This was formed in the Tangkhul area of Ukhrul with some Thadou Churches. Luichumhao and T. Luikham were appointed to look after NEBAM.²⁶²

3.1.1.2 Sadar Baptist Association

The second Association was named Sadar Baptist Association. The tribes that are included in this Association are Kom, Thadou and Thangal Nagas. Porom Singh and Longkhobel were appointed to lead and supervised this Association. After some years, Theba Kilong was appointed in place of Longkhobel.²⁶³

3.1.1.3 North-West Baptist Association

The third Association was North-West Baptist Association in Tamenglong area. This Association covers the following tribes: Rongmei, Liangmei, Kom, Thadou, Zemei, Paumei and Chiru. Helkhup Chongloi was appointed as Superintendent Pastor to look after this

²⁶⁰ Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 51.

²⁶¹ ABFMS 1922: One-Hundred-Eight Annual Report, 92-5.

²⁶² Luikham, *A Short History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 30-31.

²⁶³ Vaiphei, ed, *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 33.

Association. Pakho Sitlhou was appointed as Teacher-cum-Evangelist and was posted at Sempang.²⁶⁴

3.1.1.4 South Sadar Baptist Association

Another Association apart from the above three was South Sadar Baptist Association. This was form by the Churches in Tengnoupal Sub-Division (now Chandel District). The Association comprises of Thadou, Anal, Mayon, Monsang and Chothe.²⁶⁵

3.1.2 Manipur Baptist Convention

With the expansion of Christianity among the various tribes in Manipur, Manipur Christian Association was reorganized and the name was change as Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) in 1928. MBC comprises of three Associations: North East Baptist Association, Sadar Baptist Association and North West Baptist Association.²⁶⁶ The Convention has its first meeting at Kangpokpi in that year 1928 with 1100 delegates from ten tribes.²⁶⁷

Presently, MBC has 29 Associations, over 1300 churches and approximately 2,00,000 baptized members. It is under the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India (CBCNEI). The Convention is also a member of Asia Pacific Baptist Federation (APBF), Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and World Council of Churches (WCC).

3.2 FORMATION OF ASSOCIATION AMONG THE KUKIS IN MANIPUR

Though the Manipur Baptist Convention was supposed to unify the increasing tribal Associations and various attempts were made during 1050's to strengthen it; it was largely unsuccessful in maintaining the unity that the churches in Manipur once had. In 1947 problem

²⁶⁴ Vaiphei, ed, *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 33.

²⁶⁵ Haokip, "*KBC Thusim*"..., 8.

²⁶⁶ The existence of the Convention was through the contribution of V. Phanitpang, the two missionaries Pettigrew and Crozier, and the national leaders like Ruichumhao, Helkhup, Ngulhao, Longkhobel, Porom Singh, Namrijinang Maipak, T. Lunkim and Pakho.Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*,52.

²⁶⁷ Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 134.

erupted between the Kukis and Nagas in North-Western Baptist Association leading to a split between them as the Standing Committee of the Association and even the missionaries could not settle in the succeeding three years.²⁶⁸

3.2.1 Reasons behind the Formation of Seperate Association

Factors that later resulted in the formation of Association entirely for the Kukis are:

- *Thadou Gal* (1917-1919): During the *Thadou Gal* many Nagas assisted the government in its operations against the Kukis, which increase the tensions between the two groups and within the Baptist Church.²⁶⁹
- *Kampai cult* movement: When the Zeliangrongs rebel against the British (and the Christians) during the *Kampai cult*²⁷⁰ movement in 1929-1931, the Kukis assisted the Government against the Nagas.²⁷¹ This further widens misunderstanding between the two.
- Personal antagonism between the two Baptist Missionaries, Pettigrew and Crozier also led to a party spirit within the Church, which to some extent encouraged tribal spirit between Kukis and Nagas.²⁷² Haokip added, “They might have sided on the respective people they are working with.”²⁷³
- Tribalism: Downs wrote, “During the second World War ‘tribalism’ emerged as an important factor in the life of the Manipur Church.”²⁷⁴ Thus, sense of selfishness, love for one’s own tribe crept into the hearts of both the tribes; communal thinking and ethnic identification were stress more, and that make bond of unity in Christ weakened.

²⁶⁸ Thongkholal Haokip, “Kuki Churches Unification Movements” *Journal of North East India Studies* Vol. 2/1 (July - December 2012), 37.

²⁶⁹ Downs, *History of Christianity in India...*, 110.

²⁷⁰ The movement was led by a Rongmei named Jadonang of Ilon village. It is a traditionalist reaction against the imposition of an alien administration that threatened the old way of life. Jadonang prophesied a kind of final Armageddon in which all the Kukis would be killed. After a period of violent rebellion Jadonang was arrested and executed.

²⁷¹ Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 150-151.

²⁷² Zeliang, *A History of the Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 37.

²⁷³ Haokip, “Kuki Churches Unification Movements...”, 35.

²⁷⁴ Downs, *History of Christianity in India...*, 134.

- Self sufficiency: At the beginning of the Christian movement, converts from both groups (Kuki and Naga) worked closely with each other. But unfortunately, the sense of common fellowship between the two began to weaken as time went on and each tribal group became more and more self-sufficient.

The immediate reason of division was: In the Annual Assembly of North-West Baptist Association Tamenglong in 1946, feeling self-sufficient, the Zeliangrong sought a reason to feel remorse over Lunneh, who was posted there as an evangelist-teacher. In 1947 Annual Assembly in Sangrumpang, some fanatic Zeliangrong entice the youths who were still in their class eight, namely Mr. Zikamang and his friends and the elder, and they create turmoil. S. Anderson, the speaker of the meeting; Seikholet Singson, who follows Anderson to be an interpreter; and Pakho try to console them, but was of no avail.²⁷⁵ The reasons of their strike according to Seikholet were:

First, they said, Lunneh said that Rev. Anderson is the Missionary for the Thadou-Kuki, and when the next missionary comes, he will be for the Nagas. Second, they said, Lunneh said that the Naga were breastfed by the Kukis. But, the main reason was that, since they felt self-sufficient, they want to have their own Association governed by themselves.²⁷⁶

Till Sanrumpang meeting, they were indeed led by the Thadou-Kukis in every Christian activity.²⁷⁷

However, according to Downs, the seed to form another separate association was first sown by the Kukis in North-west Baptist. He wrote,

The first to form tribal Association in Manipur were the Kukis of the North-West Baptist Association. In 1943 representatives of the Kuki Churches met at Saikul village to form what was then called the Kuki Christian Organization (KCO). Until

²⁷⁵ Haokip, "KBC Thusim"..., 11.

²⁷⁶ Interview with Rev. Seikholet Singson, Bongmol, on April 20, 2016.

²⁷⁷ Haokip, "KBC Thusim"..., 10.

1947 this organization constituted a kind of caucus within the association, but in that year it requested recognition as a separated Association.²⁷⁸

3.2.1 Formation of Kuki Baptist Association

Since there were no more ways to unite the two groups in North-Western Baptist Association, after two years in 1949, the Thadou-Kukis have a conference without any (Association) name in Tujangvaichong and decided to form a separate Association. Satkhosei Thangeo, Seilen Hangsing, Otkhosei Haokip, Tongkhopao Ngoilu, Mangkhohen, Palal Lhouvum, Lenjahao Malneo took an initiative part by contributing a small amount of money and send Seikholet Singson as Evangelist-cum-Organiser by paying Rs. 40/- per month. Likewise, Seikholet went around on tour to every Kuki Baptist village in Manipur and organized the formation of separate Association.

Thus, in the meeting at South Changoubung in the early part of 1950, separate Association that belongs entirely for the Kuki tribes, the Kuki Christian Association (KCA) was established.²⁷⁹ All the other writers wrote, with the reorganisation of MBC in 1955, KCA was changed to Kuki Baptist Association (KBA) bearing the name Manipur Baptist Association No.5.²⁸⁰ But according to Seikholet, “On that meeting in Changoubung, John Anderson²⁸¹ and his wife came and promised that, “if the Kukis are to form Association, monthly Evangelistic appropriation can be given to them from the head office.” Therefore, the name of the Association was changed from Kuki Christian Association to Kuki Baptist Association in the Changoubung meeting itself.”²⁸²

The first office bearer of the Association were: Chairman, S.L. Palal (after sometime he was replaced by S.L. Lunneh); Field Secretary, Tongkhohao Hangsing; Field Evangelist, Seikholet

²⁷⁸ Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 134.

²⁷⁹ Interview with Rev. Seikholet Singson, Bongmol, on April 20, 2016.

²⁸⁰ Downs, *The Mighty Works of God...*, 135.cf. Sithou, *Thadou Kuki Christianite Thusim Chomcha...*, 35, Haokip, *Overcoming Church division in Manipur...*, 6.

²⁸¹ The then American Baptist Missionary to Manipur.

²⁸² Interview with Rev. Seikholet Singson, Bongmol, on April 20, 2016.

Singson; and Treasurer Tongkothang; Pastors, Pakho Sitlhou and Tongkhopao Ngailut. Songneh Lhouvum's house was rented to be used as an office, and so begins the long run of KBA.²⁸³

Since KBA cannot just exist without land and Office, Seikholet Singson (Field Evangelist) and S.L. Lunneh (Chairman) approach V. Sundaram (Deputy Commissioner of Manipur) for a plot of land. As per their request, Sundaram give them 17½ acres of Government land at Motbung to be use as Mission Compound, and the office was shifted from Kangpokpi to Motbung.²⁸⁴

When Seikholet Singson was appointed to be the Executive Secretary of MBC and Executive Committee Member in Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI), he initiates the recognition of KBA by MBC and CBCNEI. Thus in 1955 itself MBC and CBCNEI recognised KBA as Manipur Baptist Association (MBA) No. 5 and the Association was granted Rs. 12,000/- of the Centre grant by the ABFMS (American Baptist Foreign Mission Society) through the CBCNEI. With that amount the Association built one pucca central office, one semi pucca building for multipurpose use, and one RCC building for the Vernacular Bible School.²⁸⁵ These are still in good condition.

After KBA was recognised by the MBC and the CBCNEI, not only the Churches of North-West, but most of the Kuki Baptist Churches of Sadar area and Tengnoupal area also joined the Association. With the recognition by MBC, Mangkho Thomsong was appointed to be the first Director and Paokhosem as clerk, and the Pastors were: Pakho Sitlhou, Tongkhopao

²⁸³ Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu...*, 29.

²⁸⁴ Interview with Rev. Seikholet Singson..., cf. Haokip, "KBC Thusim"..., 12; Vaiphei, ed, "Thadou Baptist Association" *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 140.

²⁸⁵ Vaiphei, ed, "Kuki Baptist Convention" *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 81-82.

Ngailut, Lungkhohen Misao, Songjalun, Henkhosei Lhangum, Songkhopao Mangte and Tongkhohen Lhoujem.²⁸⁶

3.2.2 Formation of North East Kuki Baptist Association (NEKBAM)

North East Kuki Baptist Association (NEKBAM) was formed by the Kukis who were previously in North East Baptist Association (NEBAM). The people group associated in NEBAM were Tangkhul and Thadou. Since the Tangkhul were majority, every meeting was conducted in Tangkhul language and the Thadou speaking group were not able to apprehend it. So, in 1955, under the leadership of Limjalet Touthang (evangelist), Tongkhojang Lunkim, Thongkhopao Singsit and Henkam Singsit, request was made to NEBAM to allow them to form a separate Association. The leaders of NEBAM on the other hand requested them back to reconsider the case of forming a separate Association and remain in the parent Association.²⁸⁷ But they permitted them to celebrate conference of their own.²⁸⁸

Since there are around 50-60 churches with a member of more than 8000 in Ukhrul area, the leaders of the Kuki Baptist Churches organised and form the new Association North-East Kuki Baptist Association Manipur in 1955.²⁸⁹ In 1957, MBC recognised NEKBAM as MBA No. 6. Soon CBCNEI also recognised this Association and the ABFMS granted Rs. 12,000/- and send it through CBCNEI. With that amount the Association bought a plot of land at Phaicham (Yaingangpokpi), and established their centre at Phaicham.²⁹⁰

The first Officer of the Association were; Tongkhojang Lunkim, Secretary; Limjalet Touthang (Lamhao), Evangelist; Hemkam Singsit, Tongkhopao Singsit and Lhuntong

²⁸⁶ Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu...*, 30.

²⁸⁷ Vaiphei, ed, "Kuki Baptist Convention" *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 82.

²⁸⁸ Haokip, "KBC Thusim"..., 12.

²⁸⁹ Haokip, "KBC Thusim"..., 12.

²⁹⁰ Vaiphei, ed, "Kuki Baptist Convention" *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 82; cf. Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu...*, 31.

Touthang. With the progress of NEKBAM, after sometime following are appointed as Evangelist: Yanghem Lunkim, Yamkhotong, Tongkhopao, and Thanghang Haolai.²⁹¹

3.3 FORMATION OF KUKI BAPTIST CONVENTION

The Kuki Baptist Convention (KBC) was formed at Tujangvaichong on March 16, 1958 with the amalgamation of KBA and NEKBAM. D.F. Duffy, Principal of Eastern Theological College, Jorhat of the CBCNEI was said to have sent a circular stating that those people group which can have at least five Associations each having a population not less than 1000 can form a linguistic Convention. This was meant to enable the native Christians to be able to stand on their own feet when the missionaries, along with their support money leave them. This news was brought by Seikholet Singson who was the then Executive Secretary of MBC and Executive Committee Member of CBCNEI. It was taken as a cue for the Kukis to form a Convention of their own, though, of course, it was not supposed to be a regional convention as such. Thus Singson informed both the leaders of KBA and NEKBAM to discuss among themselves and avail this opportunity. When both the leaders agreed, they convened a meeting of their own associations.²⁹²

Accordingly, the KBA leaders met at Kangchup IB while NEKBAM leaders had theirs in Zalenbung Church. When both Associations agreed, a joint meeting of the two associations was convened at Tujangvaichong Baptist Church on March 15-16, 1958 where they merged together into one to form a single linguistic Convention on March 16, 1958 known as Kuki Baptist Convention (KBC).²⁹³ Following this, all the erstwhile properties owned by the two Associations have become that of KBC. The KBA centre at Motbung was used as

²⁹¹ Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu...*, 31.

²⁹² Thongkhosei Haokip, "It All Began at Tujangvaichong: A Brief Historical Significance in the formation and Development of the Kuki Baptist Church in Manipur," *Kuki Baptist Centenary, 2014, Souvenir*, edited by Paokhohao Haokip (Imphal: Souvenir Committee Centenary Celebration, 2014), 37.

²⁹³ KBC Thusim..., 14-15.

administrative office, while the NEKBAM centre at Phaicham was used as a Bible School named after Ngulhao as “Ngulhao Memorial Bible School (NMBS)” which offered a two year vernacular course.²⁹⁴ Henkholen wrote, “The two independent Associations had united at their will without destroying their individualities. Their legal entities and their exclusive rights over moveable or immovable properties, centres, buildings and other were being retained.”²⁹⁵ The first triennial fellowship of KBC was held at Keithelmanbi during March 5-8, 1959.

The first office bearers of KBC were: Sutkai Chongloi, President; Tongkhojang Lunkim, Executive Secretary; Mangkho Thomsong, Treasurer; Paokhosem Kholhou, Clerk; Tongkhojam Baite, Chowkidar.²⁹⁶

3.4 CONTINUATION OF KUKI BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Though Kuki Baptist Convention was formed with the amalgamation of two Associations, i.e. KBA and NEKBAM, unity doesn't last long. Within a decade in 1967, Kuki Baptist Convention was again declared dissolved and Kuki Baptist Association was once again revived. The reasons behind the continuation of KBA will be discussed in the following.

3.4.1 Controversy over Mission Centre Phaicham

When the two Associations formed KBC, it was decided that the Mission Compound of KBA in Motbung shall be the Office of KBC and the Mission Compound of NEKBAM in Phaicham shall be a vernacular Bible School. But when the KBC decided to shift Ngulhao Memorial Bible School from Phaicham, and shifted it, this enraged the people surrounding Phaicham, who formerly belonged to NEKBAM. Thus NEKBAM petitioned their withdrawal

²⁹⁴ Alun Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu...*, 34.

²⁹⁵ Henkholen Sailo, “Memorandum submitted to the Executive Secretary of Manipur Baptist Council of Churches by the Kuki Baptist Association (MBA No. 5) for Renewal of Recognition.” (Motbung: 27th November, 1967), 1.

²⁹⁶ Alun Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu...*, 33.

from KBC in 1965.²⁹⁷ Not only that they withdraw, they also seize back their properties that were already submitted to KBC centre, Motbung.²⁹⁸ Thus both the land and the properties that once belonged to NEKBAM were taken back.

3.4.2 Controversy over Language

According to Seikholet, “The first problem over language occurred in 1965 at the Bible School at Phaicham when two teachers disputed about it; that resulted to the break of the united Church.”²⁹⁹ Indeed, since 1967 there was a great misunderstanding between Thadou and Kuki³⁰⁰ over language in KBC. From the inception of KBC, Tongkhojang Lunkim had enunciated an absurd proposition that Thadou Language should be named as Kuki language. Being indoctrinated by him, some of the Christian leaders of KBC started clamouring for immediate change of Thadou to Kuki and lent active support to his campaign. Sailo wrote,

“This even antagonised many people and undermined the spiritual growth of the churches and paralysed evangelism, and they recklessly embarked upon the scheme of changing Thadou to Kuki, and this became their main objective.”³⁰¹

Bible unites the Christian all over the world. But the translation of Bible into Thadou language divides the people and the Association. The New Testament translated by Ngulhao Thomsong that was released on 1942 was name as Thadou Kuki New Testament. However, the translation of Holy Bible in Thadou language by Tongkhojang Lunkim was named as “Kuki Reference Edition/Holy Bible in Kuki”. This caused havoc among the people and increased the tension over the language issue, which even led to file a court case. Khup Za Go writes,

²⁹⁷ Hawlngam Haokip, “Kuki Baptist Centenary Celebration under the Leadership of Kuki Baptist Convention” *Kuki Baptist Centenary, 2014, Souvenir*, edited by Paokhohao Haokip (Imphal: Souvenir Committee Centenary Celebration, 2014), 9.

²⁹⁸ KBC Thusim..., 16; cf. Alun Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu...*, 91.

²⁹⁹ Interview with Rev. Seikholet Singson on 20/12/2001 by Thogkhosei Haokip, quoted from Haokip, *Overcoming Church division in Manipur...*, 10.

³⁰⁰ To know more about Thadou and Kuki, go to chapter one point 1.1.3.2.1 and 1.2.

³⁰¹ Sailo, “Mermorandum submitted to the Executive Secretary..., 4.

“A court injunction was sought, a very rare phenomenon in the North East, to prohibit the circulation of the Bible with the name “Kuki” printed on it. They (the Thadous) argued that since in the earlier New Testament the name had been given as “Thadou-Kuki” this should also be done for the whole Bible.”³⁰²

So, the releasing ceremony of the Holy Bible “Kuki Reference Edition” was not possible in Manipur, and thus was released at Molvom, Nagaland on June 20, 1971. The issue over language increased, and there can be no appropriate solution. Therefore, MBA No. 5 which comprises of mostly Thadou continued KBA.

3.4.3 Controversy over Motbung Centre

While forming KBC it was decided that Motbung should be the Head Office of the union of two Associations. As time goes by, there are some leaders who opined that Head office Motbung should be shifted to Imphal.³⁰³ Moreover, with the establishment of Kuki Christian Council (KCC)³⁰⁴ most of the KBC properties (KBA properties) were shifted to Imphal KCC office and the Accountant of KBC was posted in the office of KCC.³⁰⁵ This also increased misunderstanding inside KBC which finally led to the continuation of KBA.

3.4.4 Withdrawal of NEKBAM from KBC

KBC was formed by the two Associations as a kind of partnership on a voluntary basis. This voluntary union being confederation in character, any one of the two Associations having an

³⁰² Khup Za Go, *A Critical Historical Study of Bible Translations Among the Zo People in North East India* (Churachandr: Chin Baptist Literature Board, 1996), 94.

³⁰³ Interview with Rev. Letkam Sithou, Pastor Thadou Baptist Association, Motbung on April 17, 2016.

³⁰⁴ KCC (Kuki Christian Council) was formed for common Christian literature work particularly Bible translation and Hymn book among some tribes. This was a great achievement in so far as it includes Kuki Christians of other denominations such Presbyterian Mission, Halflong, Cachar District, Assam, Baptist Mission, Nagaland, Manipur and Burma, KCA (now ECA) in Association with the North East India General Mission, Manipur and Methodist Mission, Burma. However due to the language crisis the “Council” was declared dissolved on August 13, 1966, 12:00 pm by the then President Khupzagou Singson. (Declaration of the Dissolution of KCC on 13/8/1966, Notification order circulated by President Khupzagou Singson). Though the Council was form to translate the Bible and have a common hymn book by different Kuki denominations, as “Kuki Christian Council” the Council was transformed into a Church called “Kuki Christian Church” on April 8, 1979 at Chalwa Baptist Church, Sadar Hills, Manipur. Thongkholal Haokip, “Kuki Churches Unification Movements” *Journal of North East India Studies* Vol. 2/1 (July - December 2012), 39.

³⁰⁵ File No. 1/1/KBA-67 (4).

absolute right can withdraw its membership at will and at any time, which means of course the dissolution of convention.³⁰⁶ Due to the controversy over the land, NEKBAM withdrew themselves from KBC in 1965,³⁰⁷ and continued NEKBAM. MBC also once again recognised them as MBA Association No. 6 on January 5, 1967.³⁰⁸

3.4.5 Constitution Abrogated

The constitution of KBC also provided an article for dissolution. According to this article the convention can be dissolved with the consent of two-thirds of the constituent members. But in contravention to the provision, NEKBAM has withdrawn herself from KBC and secured recognition from MBC. This withdrawal of NEKBAM from KBC has automatically abrogated the constitution. Since NEKBAM withdrew herself from KBC, the constitution is abrogated and Convention cannot be formed by just one Association; and thus, there is no more KBC, and KBA too was once again continued.

Meanwhile, when the MBC and CBCNEI abolished the number wise Association and permitted to name the Association after their tribe's name, MBA No. 6 had a meeting at T. Wakotphai Baptist Church in 1971 and was renamed as Chongthu Baptist Association (Ch.BA).³⁰⁹

3.4.6 Continuation of KBA

The first meeting regarding the continuation of KBA was held on August 2, 1967. Following are the resolutions passed that day:³¹⁰

³⁰⁶ Sailo, "Mermorandum submitted to the Executive Secretary...", 4.

³⁰⁷ According to Haolai, NEKBAM seized back their property from Motbung in 1962 (Haolai, *KBC Diary...*, 91). If this is the case, the withdrawal of NEKBAM from KBC will be 1961 or early 1962. 1965 may be the year of their their official withdrawal, the year they move the MBC for re-recognition of MBA No. 6.

³⁰⁸ Haokip, "Kuki Baptist Centenary...", 10.

³⁰⁹ Haokip, "Kuki Baptist Centenary...", 10. Later Chongthu Baptist Association was rename again as Chongthu Baptist Churches Association (CBCA).

³¹⁰ File No. 1/1/KBA-67, "Continuation of Kuki Baptist Association (Association No. 5), 2/8/67.

Resolution No. 1. KBC was form for the extension of the kingdom of Christ. It doesn't go wrong nor stumble. It was called KBC in union with NEKBAM. (Since NEKBAM has withdrawn), the best Association to continue among the many Associations is KBA.

Resolution No. 2. It was name KBC with the union of KBA and NEKBAM and was the constitution made. But since, NEKBAM turns back and MBC renew the recognition as MBA No. 6 on January 5, 1967; Constitution is abrogated, and the abrogation of constitution means there is no more KBC. With the return of NEKBAM, KBA also returns.

Resolution No. 3. On April 3, 1964 the KBC leaders went to pay Rs. 250/- to the office of MBC, which means KBC is just an Association No. 5. This shows that: "though it is said that KBC is a Convention, it is equal to the Associations; which also means only KBA is called KBC." Further CBCNEI distribute equal amount of money to KBC (a convention that consist of huge congregation and churches) and NEKBAM (a small and tiny Association). This shows that: KBC and NEKBAM are equal. Therefore though it was externally a convention, internally it was already just an Association No. 5.

Resolution No. 4. Both KBC and KCC are no more religious but a political organisation. Instead of focusing on the individual salvation of everyone, they focused on the numerical number (quantity) of believers in the denomination, in order that they will be glorified by other. So, in order to proclaim the gospel we need to have an evangelistic Association. So, it is appropriate to continue KBA.

KBA once again held a meeting on August 22-24, 1967. Here lies the declaration for the continuation of Kuki Baptist Association, MBA No. 5.

...as per the finding of some churches with some elders of the churches who acquires intelligence and some scholars; it is good in the sight of God, and better for the extension of the kingdom of Christ, that, it will be more truthful to re-establish KBA. Therefore, on this day of August 23, 1967 (Wednesday), I, Henkholen Chairman of the Meeting on behalf of the Churches declare the re-establishment of KBA No. 5, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.³¹¹

Regarding land,

"The land of KBA (MBA No. 5), which is in Motbung is in the name of then Field Director Mangkho Thomsong. Though the land belongs to KBA, the land cannot be in the name of an Association, therefore, the document was in the name of Mangkho. The land belongs to KBA. Therefore, from the day of the continuation

³¹¹ Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu...*, 91.

of KBA, the Association again possess the land. All the properties of KBA once again belong to KBA.”³¹²

KBA and NEKBAM held a joint meeting on August 19, 1970 over the issue of properties.

Some of the important resolutions concerning properties are:³¹³

Resolution No. 4. In the exercise of their absolutely exclusive rights thing the immovable properties such as lands, Centre Building or anything attached to them and movable properties such as furniture, lightning appliances, machines, all the connected papers and documents or copy rights of books whether religious or secular which were ever published by MBA No. 5 and MBA No. 6 or unpublished materials or any other things which are supposed to be under their possession or control, the MBA No. 5 and MBA No. 6 have taken physical possession of their respective lands and Centre buildings.

Further resolved that Shri. T. Lunkim and any of his related people³¹⁴ were requested kindly to return all the connected or relevant papers for documents or articles copy rights of the books ever published by KBA and NEKBAM which were size or happened to be in their custody or possession, to the respective owner on an early date.

Resolution No. 5. Resolved that any claim or interference or any attempt to claim the ownership or possession of the properties stated above or to interfere from any unauthorised agency in the supervision or management of the properties for both preservation and further improvement be declared unwarranted and illegal.

Thus was the Kuki Baptist Association once again continued, and the Manipur Baptist Convention renews their recognition as MBC, MBA No. 5 on December 15, 1970.³¹⁵

The first officers of the renewed KBA are: President: Hemkholen Sitlhou; Vice President: Ashong Singsit; General Secretary: Thangkhochoon Thomsong; Organiser: Jamkhomang Kipgen and Thangkhopao Sitlhou; Evangelist: Helien Kipgen and Kimpao Singsit; Central Bible Institute: Head Master: Mangkho G.Th, Jangkholun C.Th, Asst. Teacher and Helien Kipgen Diploma, Asst. Tacher; Clerk: Paokhosem and Chowkider: Jamkhohao. These new

³¹² Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu...*, 91.

³¹³ Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu...*, 91.

³¹⁴ Some churches under the leadership of Rev. Tongkhojang Lunkim and Mr. S. Thanggeo, still retained the title of KBC. Moreover with the formation of KCC and T. Lunkim the being the President of KCC, all the KBA properties and NEKBAM properties that was in the office of KBC was transferred to KCC office, Imphal, and even after the re-establishment of both the Association, KCC still retained all the properties.

³¹⁵ MBC Assembly Resolution No. 6, December 15, 1970.

appointees start their work from September 1, 1967. Further Mr. Luhen of Taloulong is appointed to be Aimol Project Evangelist on 1968.³¹⁶

The first KBA Executive Central Committee as appointed on August 23, 1967 are: Henkholen, Asong Singsit, Sokhup, Pastor Keithelmanbi; Thangkhopao, Pastor Motbung; Lunhen, Pastor Taloulong; Letkhoseh, Imphal; Thangkhochoh, Imphal; Paokhosem, Motbung; Mangkho Thomsong, Seimang, Head Master; Tongkhothang, Asst. Teacher; Vumkam, Ranger; Helien Kipgen, Youth Promoter; Jammang, Pastor Haipi; and Sehlum, Pastor Zalenphai.³¹⁷

3.5 RECHRISTENING OF KUKI BAPTIST ASSOCIATION TO THADOU BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Formally KBA was formed by the many tribes under the nomenclature Kuki. With the increase of Christian population all over Manipur, each and every tribe were self sufficient to form an Association according to the name of their tribes. Kim Vaiphei further states, there was some internal problem among the Churches of KBA in regards to tribal disunity. Therefore some left the organisation to form their own church organisation, and, thus only the Thadous remained in No. 5 of the Associations.³¹⁸

Meanwhile the MBC and CBCNEI had abolished the number wise Association and permitted to name the Association after their tribe's name.³¹⁹ KBA now consisting of only Thadou had in mind to form an Association of their own after the name of their tribe. Therefore, in the General Assembly held at Haipi Baptist Church during September 28 to October 1, 1971; on the 30th of September, the members representing the KBA Churches

³¹⁶ TBA Diary, 1967-1981 (1981), 1-2.

³¹⁷ TBA Diary..., 5-7.

³¹⁸ Vaiphei, ed, "Thadou Baptist Association" *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 140.

³¹⁹ Up to this time MBC recognised KBA only as MBA No. 5.

rechristen the name Kuki Baptist Association (KBA) to Thadou Baptist Association (TBA).³²⁰ Rev. Helien Kipgen became the first Field secretary of TBA.³²¹ The renaming of the Association as Thadou Baptist Association has been approved by the Manipur Baptist Convention of Churches vide Resolution No. 16, Sl. No. 1 of 53rd MBCC Assembly, dated: Imphal, the 3rd December, 1971.³²²

3.6 DEVELOPMENT OF THADOU BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

TBA is an indigenous association run by the contribution of the local Churches without any foreign aid or sponsor from any other agencies. Each Church is allotted with a certain amount of share each year, according to their size and members. The local Churches paid the amount allotted, and with that money the Association runs the administration, built offices and quarters, do a relief work, paid the workers pay, sponsors Evangelist and Missionaries, do Church planting and all other necessary works.

3.6.1 Objective, Vision, Mission and Core Values of TBA³²³

3.6.1.1 Main Objectives

The main objectives of TBA is to mobilize the rural Churches, fulfil the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ by sending missionaries and evangelists to the unreached people; to unite the churches for closer fellowship and services; to help the rural people in socio-

³²⁰ KBA General Assembly Resolution C.C. 7, No. 1 (Sept. 28-Oct.1, 1971); cf. TBA Diary..., 8.

³²¹ Vumthang Sitlhou, "Thadou te lah'a Gospel hunglut le TBAI Thusim Chomcha," *25th Year Anniversary of Thadou Baptist Association – India Souvenir 1971-1996*, edited by TK Siema and Lunkholal Kipgen, (Motbung: TBA Souvenir Committee, 1996), 32.

³²² Application written to The General Secretary of CBCNEI, Guwahati, Assam, by Henkholen Sitlhou, Vice President of TBA, No. 10/153RE/70-71 (Dated: Motbung, February 6, 1972), 1.

³²³ Vumthang Sithou, ed, "Thadou Baptist Association – India, Vision & Mission Statement" *TBA Thuphon*, Vol 1/14 (January-March, 2014), cover page.

economic life development and to have fellowship and partnership with the other Christian Organizations within the country and abroad.³²⁴

3.6.1.2 Vision Statement

All the Thadou Christian must be mature in God's word and in praising the Lord, must holdfast on the truth and live in peace with all mankind, must show love and respect to all creations, establish Thadou Christian Fellowship Churches in all cities, make TBA centre the main centre for International conference, retreat centre and ministry resources.

3.6.1.3 Mission Statement of TBA

Train elegant youth for future leaders to bring changes, conduct seminars, workshops and trainings, have fellowship and partnership with other Christian organizations, develop Ngulhao Theological Seminary, raise and send above 50 missionaries before Golden Jubilee, create awareness in the mind of people in regards to the importance of protecting eco-environment, increase the Association's ministerial resources, have programme to reconstruct social life and establish peace, and rejuvenate the spiritual life of the churches to revived their spirituality and become a missionary oriented churches.

3.6.1.4 Core Value

Serving the Lord with diligence and humility.

3.6.1.5 Theme

Go and Preach (Mark. 16:15).

³²⁴ Lunkholal Kipgen, "A Profile on Thadou Baptist Association, India" *The 8th Pentennial Conference 21-24 February, 2013 Souvenir*, edited by Thangkai Sitlhou (Haipi: TBAI, 2013), 3.

3.6.2 Departments of TBA

Initially TBA had only one Department. That department was headed by Executive Secretary and under his supervision all the ministries were run through the assistance of Superintendent Pastors. For further development, the Association slowly starts to establish different Departments. Each Department have its own Chairman/President, Departmental Secretary, Committee and Board Members. They did their best in their respective department to fulfil the objectives, vision and mission of the Association. But the entire department is supervised by the Executive Secretary, and the finance managed by the Finance Secretary of the Association.

3.6.2.1 Mission and Evangelism Department

In the early days Mission and Evangelism Department was looked after by the General Department. Apart from Superintendent Pastors the Association also had Evangelists and Missionaries to evangelize the Churches and the unreached people. But in 1988, the Association open a new Department called Mission and Evangelism Department, and Thangkholet Kipgen was appointed as the first Mission Secretary. The Association actively undertook the mission project from 1989.³²⁵ The Mission Department conducts Crusades in the local Churches, send evangelists and missionaries in various parts of India: Manipur, Tripura, Assam, and Andhra-Pradesh; and in foreign countries like Nepal and Myanmar. According to the 56th General Assembly Mission Report on February, 2016, TBA Mission & Evangelism Department has altogether 38 Evangelists and Missionaries.³²⁶

³²⁵ Vaiphei, ed, "Thadou Baptist Association" *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 141.

³²⁶ S.M. Hao, *Annual Report of Mission Department TBA-I, during the 56th Annual General Assembly 2015-2016 at Keithelmanbi Baptist Church* (9-12 February, 2016), 3-4. As reported by Mission Secretary in the TBA Staff meeting at TBA Centre on May 21, 2016, TBA Mission Department at present have 44 Missionaries working in Manipur, Assam, Trira, Nepal and Myanmar.

3.6.2.2 Women Department

The Women Department called Thadou Baptist Association Women Society (TBAWS) was established in the year 1970. The first Women Fellowship meeting was held at Bolsang Baptist Church in 1971 under the leadership of Mrs. Lhingkhonei Simte.³²⁷ According to Nengnou (present Secretary) TBAWS was formed for the extension of the Kingdom of God, to be united in flesh and in spirit on December 16, 1971. But the first Women Assembly was held in the year 1969 while TBA was still KBA.³²⁸

The Women Society has been doing a lot of work for strengthening of the Churches and Missionary work. The TBAWS also engages in organizing Fasting Prayers, Bible Camps, Leadership Training, Seminars, Conferences and Crusades to strengthen the faith of the Church. TBAWS help the Association as its right hand by purchasing office equipments like type writers and gesterner (in the past), furniture, utensils and other requirements for the office and guest house. They decorated Mission Compound with Women Quarter and Girls' Hostel.

In the early days TBAWS keep on sponsoring Bible College students. The Women Society also helps the orphans in the orphanages home each year. Before and even after the formation of Child Evangelism Department (CED) in TBA (1997), TBAWS also works among the children through sponsoring Child Evangelist and organizing Bible Camp among the Children. Apart from that, they also continuously sponsored missionaries and evangelists among the Meiteis and Nepalis in Manipur, Nepal and Myanmar. Presently they

³²⁷ Vaiphei, ed, "Thadou Baptist Association" *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 141. Another source said that KBA Women Society meeting was first held in February 23-26, 1968 at Motbung Baptist Church, and the first Women Secretary was Rev. Thangjalhun. However, Thangjalhun served only for a few month (1/3/68 - 10/12/68). TBA Diary..., 4. This means the Women Society was form on 1968 but was fully organised on 1970 and start functioning from 1971.

³²⁸ Nengnou Simte, "A Brief History of TBA Women Society," *The 4th Thadou Baptist Association – India, Women Society Conference - 2008 Souvenir*, edited by Paocha Lhouvum (Motbung: TBA Women Society, 2008), 1.

are sponsoring two Missionaries in Myanmar. Their last Conference was held on January 28 to February 1, 2016 at L.S. Play Ground, Motbung.³²⁹

3.6.2.3 Youth Department

Youth Department (called Baptist Youth Fellowship – BYF) was formerly called “Christian Endeavour” (C.E.) before it was organized as a separate Department. Perceiving that Youth were the future pillars and leaders of the nation, under the leadership of Dongkho, Mangkho, Vumkam and Vumkhohen, twenty five young people gather at Centre Office, Motbung on May 22, 1971. The meeting was presided by Helien Kipgen, the then Field Secretary of KBA as chairman, and Lamsiem as Recording Secretary. On that day the so called Kuki Baptist Youth Fellowship (KBYP) was established. With the rechristening of KBA to TBA on 30th of September, KBYP was also changed as TBYP,³³⁰ and later on as TBAYF. The first office bearers were Mr. Lamsiem, President; Mr. Lalsat Sitlhou, Vice President; Mr. Sehchon, Secretary and Mr. Hemdou, Treasurer.³³¹

Frequent activities of TBAYF are: Youth Camp, Seminar, Music (tonic solfa and staff notation) training, Song practices, Leadership Training, Youth Prayer Fellowship (whole day/whole night fasting prayer). Gospel Olympics and Conferences are conducted almost every year for the upliftment of the youth’s physical and spiritual life. These are mostly conducted in general for the whole Association and sometimes as Area wise.

Youths are a crown for the Association, especially in regards to music and songs. In almost every Conferences of MBC, TBAYF always bags the top, if not in 2nd or 3rd positions in

³²⁹ Simte, “A Brief History of TBA Women Society..., 1-2; cf. Vaiphei, ed, “Thadou Baptist Association” *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 141. Nengnou Simte, *Annual Report of Women Society, TBA, during the 56th Annual General Assembly 2015-2016 at Keithelmanbi Baptist Church (9-12 February, 2016)*, 2-3.

³³⁰ Paotinlal Lhouvum, “A Brief History of Thadou Baptist Association Youth Fellowship” *The VI Youth Triennial Conference – 2005 Souvenir*, Edited by Kaingul Sitlhou (Motbung: TBAYF, 2005), 12.

³³¹ Vaiphei, ed, “Thadou Baptist Association” *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 141.

song competition. They also help the office in developing properties and building, such as Keyboard, Computer, Sound system, Youth Office, Youth Quarter etc. Apart from other activities, TBAYF also actively took part in Missionary project in Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar time to time. TBAYF at present sponsors one Missionary in Myanmar and is attempting for more.³³²

3.6.2.4 Education Department

The TBA Christian Education Department was founded in the year 1965, and Mr. Helien Kipgen was the first Education Department Secretary.³³³ This is the Department that enrich its members into the realm of Christian education. It does not only impart knowledge of God's word through Sunday School by publishing and distributing lots of material for both children and adults; but also have a keen interest on secular education. It has one High School (Baptist English High School) within the Association campus which is affiliated to Christian Education Board of CBCNEI and Board of Secondary Education Manipur (BSEM); and few branch schools situated in villages. Unfortunately most of the branch schools had defunct and only Baptist High School, Motbung and Baptist English School Thenjang remains. Previously Ngulhao Theological Seminary (NTS) was taken care by the Education Department, but now it's autonomous.

Christian Education Board also extended its project to Karbi-Anglong, Assam, and Myanmar. For the improvement of Sunday School, the Christian Education Board conducts Sunday School Training, Pastors Training and other Seminar every year.³³⁴ Apart from Sunday School, Education Department also conducts Bible Quiz every year for the whole

³³² Lhouvum, "A Brief History of Thadou Baptist Association...", 13-14, cf. Kaigoulun, *Annual Report of Youth Society, TBA, during the 56th Annual General Assembly 2015-2016 at Keithelmanbi Baptist Church* (9-12 February, 2016), 1-4.

³³³ Interview with Rev. Vumthang Sithou and Rev. Lunlal Kipgen at TBA Centre on May 21, 2016.

³³⁴ Vaiphei, ed, "Thadou Baptist Association" *The Manipur Baptist Convention...*, 141.

Association with an attractive prize. Vacation Bible School (VBS) and Children Bible School (CBS) were also conducted.

3.6.2.5 Child Evangelism Department

Prior to the establishment of Child Evangelism Department (CED), the physical and spiritual necessities of the children in the Association were taken care by the Women Society by conducting Children's Camp in every Church through engaging and sponsoring Child Evangelist. Finding the importance of having a separate Department for Children, the Association in the General Assembly on December 15, 1997 opened a new Department called Child Evangelism Department. The first Executive members were: SK. Thanglenmang (President), SL. Tonglen, Ngahnu and Hatnu.³³⁵ The first Annual Report of CED was submitted in the 1998 General Annual Assembly by CED first Secretary Ms. Hoineichong.³³⁶

The main activities of CED are: conducting Bible Camps for children in the Churches, teaching music and songs, dances, choreography, Bible words, Bible actions, etc. CED also conducts CED Day of Competition every year, where every CED from each Church come and participates in various items. The CED leaders of every Church met twice or thrice every year and have fasting prayers for the children.

3.6.3 Area Wise Division of TBA

To fulfil its Objectives, Vision and Mission, the Association also divides its Churches into Area (*Gambih*). Since the Association was formed by various villages and many small Churches, each and every Church cannot have an ordained Pastor to minister sacraments and other ordinances. Therefore, in the beginning, the Association appointed some ordained

³³⁵ The 21st Thadou Baptist Association - India, Annual General Assembly 1997 Resolution No. 25/VI.

³³⁶ The 22nd Thadou Baptist Association - India, Annual General Assembly 1998, CED Report (3/V).

Pastors as Superintendent Pastors to go around the whole Association and do the sacraments. The local Churches have their own local Pastor (Head Deacon) who is not ordained, who looks after the local Churches, in the absence of the Pastors. Later when the Association was divided into areas, the Superintendent Pastor was change to Area Pastor (*Gambih Pastor*).

Presently, the Association is divided into seven *Gambih*, viz. Twilang *Gambih*, Keithelmanbi *Gambih*, Twipajang *Gambih*, K. Geljang *Gambih*, Motbung *Gambih*, Churachanr *Gambih* and Jiribam *Gambih*. Each *Gambih* is taken care by a *Gambih* Pastor.

The Association also have five Centre Church (C/C), viz. Kangpokpi C/C, Moreh C/C, Churachandpur C/C, Monglenphai C/C, and Imphal C/C, and one Pastor look after each Centre Church.

Out of the many Church organisations among the Thadou, only TBA bears the name Thadou. The other major Associations are Kuki Baptist Convention, Chongthu Baptist Churches Association, Kuki Christian Church, Evangelical Baptist Convention, Evangelical Christian Association, Biblical Baptist Church, Presbyterian Church of India, Christian Revival Church, etc. With a lot of struggle TBA emerge itself along with another Association. It's not perfect but still in the process of developing. It will take time and effort to achieve its aim and objectives. However with the least it can do, it's striving to be a source of benefit for its people. The contribution of TBA will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER – 4

CONTRIBUTION OF THADOU BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Thadou Baptist Association is one of the smallest Associations among the Thadou in Manipur. The Association has fewer members with less income in comparison with the other Associations. However, when it comes towards contribution for its people all around the world and for the extension of the Kingdom of God, TBA is not less than any other Association. However the few contributions it makes for the community are not recognized. Therefore, this chapter will bring into light the contribution TBA had made for the people and the Church.

4.1 CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TBA contributed quite significantly to the socio-economic development of its people. It is financially insufficient and is still struggling to get help from other; still, out of passion and dedication TBA did its best and contributed not less than other organisation. The few contributions it made had a great impact.

4.1.1 Upholding Thadou Tribal Identity

The most important contribution of TBA is upholding the Thadou tribal Identity. As mentioned earlier, the Thadous and Kuki are always in a crisis. The degradation of the Kuki nation that consist many tribes, into a single tribe increases the tension between the two. When Kuki, a nomenclature of many tribes was recognised as a tribe, the people who uphold Kuki as a tribe forcefully try to claim Thadou language as Kuki language, Thadou Culture as Kuki Culture, Thadou tradition as Kuki tradition etc. In this tense situation, there came into existence many political, religious, social and student organization which bears the name Kuki. But there was just a single organization that bears the name Thadou, i.e. Thadou Baptist Association. Further, due to the ignorance of the Thadou People, not only the well known

Thadou Gal (Thadou War) of 1917-1919 was called and written as Kuki Rebellion by the people who are in the proponent of Kuki and more advanced than the Thadou people, the name and the tribe Thadou had been almost in extinct.

In such a critical situation, TBA, though a religious organisation and does not play a political role, bridges the gap and plays a major role in upholding and maintaining the socio-cultural and political identity of the Thadous. It was only later on that different socio-political and student organization like Thadou Inpi (formally known as Thadou Tribe Council - TTC), Thadou Student Association (TSA), Thadou Youth Organization (TYO), Thadou Women Organization (TWO) etc. were formed to develop and maintain the identity Thadou.

4.1.2 Relief Programme

TBA is not a silent spectator when hardships befall its people. It keeps on stretching out its helping hand from time to time through a relief work. Following are the relief programme run by TBA for the social and economic development of its people during tribal conflict, natural calamities and assistance to the poor and needy when they are desperately in need.

4.1.2.1 Assistance during Kuki-Naga Conflict

Of many conflict, the Kuki–Naga conflict of the 1992-1995³³⁷ took a heavy toll of more than a thousand lives, with hundreds of homes and villages of both communities destroyed and more than 100,000 people internally displaced. It was concentrated mainly on four districts of Manipur, namely Tamenglong, Senapati, Ukhrul and Chandel. During the conflict more than

³³⁷ The Kuki-Naga conflict of 1990s is one of the most destructive, widespread and meanwhile the lengthiest conflict scenario in the region. The conflict extended across three states of the Northeast, Manipur, Nagaland and Assam. Starting in late 1992, the conflict was particularly intense from 1993 to 1994, then slowly abated from 1997 onwards, but continues to simmer. Thangkhohal Haokip, “The Kuki–Naga Conflict in the Light of Recent Publications” *South Asia Research* Vol. 33/1(2013), 78.

20 villages of TBA, all the houses including their Churches have been destroyed and burnt to ashes.³³⁸

In that tense situation TBA did its best to help the displaced Thadou people who fled from their respective place and seek refuges in the Thadou dominated area. Apart from providing shelter, food and clothing from their expenses, TBA did a fund drive from other Christian brethren and organisation inside and outside India. With the amount they received from donors for relief, TBA helped the poor, feed the unfed, clothed the naked and distributes basic needs without any discrimination and partiality from TBA Centre. Thus TBA secure the life of the distressed by providing them shelter, their basic needs, and give them hope to start afresh.

4.1.2.2 Assistance during Natural Calamities

TBA annually has a relief fund in its budget. With that amount and contingency, it keeps on helping people in need especially in regards to accidents and natural disasters. Out of the many relief programmes in the past, mention may be made of the most recent incident TBA did extend its help during the landslide which affected many villages in Chandel District, where the whole village of Joumol was swept away and took 20 lives, and among the flood affected people in Myanmar. TBA in collaboration with Compassion Manipur provides materials at the cost of over four lakhs for shelters, food and clothing, and utensils, medicine etc. in Chakpikarong, Pallel and Khengjol sub-division on September 11, 2015.³³⁹

TBA also helped the victims of the recent earthquake on January 4, 2016 by providing relief materials like food stuffs-rice, daal, potato, and shelter building material at the Centre.³⁴⁰ TBA

³³⁸ Vumthang Sitlhou, "Thadou te lah'a Gospel...", 32.

³³⁹ Vumthang Sithou, ed, "Thu Chomchom" *TBA Thuphon*, Vol V/17 (September, 2016), 15. cf Vumthang Sithou, *Annual Report of General Department TBA-I, during the 56th Annual General Assembly 2015-2016 at Keithelmanbi Baptist Church* (9-12 February, 2016), 2.

³⁴⁰ Vumthang Sithou, ed, "Thu Chomchom" *TBA Thuphon*, Vol VI/01 (January - March, 2016), 5

also helped the nine victims killed by Manipur Government security forces during the strike against the three Bills implemented against the tribal in Manipur.³⁴¹ Moreover TBA from time to time helps the farmers through distributing seeds for plantation, especially when the crops were destroyed by natural calamities. TBA will always stretch out its hand to help especially in times of destitute due to natural calamities.

4.1.2.3 Assistance to Orphanage

To help the orphan as individual and orphans in the orphanage homes is one of the philanthropic activities of TBAWS every year since its inception. Apart from relief fund, each woman in every Church donates materials and contributes a certain amount of money each year. When the amount and the material every woman has contributed are collected, they are put together with the relief fund, and the women executives with the officers go to a certain orphanage home by the end of the year and give it for the wellbeing of the orphans.³⁴² Previously the TBAWS help only Sangamuan *Inn* (Orphanage home which was established by the Kuki Women Organisation) in Churachandpur, but now the Women Society extended their help to every orphanage home situated among the Thadous in Manipur and Myanmar.³⁴³ Apart from the material possession they provided, their motherly intimation with the children, the hope and encourage they give, and their prayers they made really comforts the children. In other words, TBAWS is the mother for the many motherless.

4.1.3 Security for the People

Since Thadou were always in crisis with other tribes. Especially during the Kuki-Naga crisis during 90s, when the people were really in need of security, TBA contributed 1/3 of its land to

³⁴¹ Vumthang Sithou, ed, "Thu Chomchom" *TBA Thuphon*, Vol V/17 (September, 2016), 15.

³⁴² Nengnou Simte, "A Brief History of TBA Women Society...", 1.

³⁴³ Nengnou Simte, *Annual Report of Women Department TBA-I, during the 56th Annual General Assembly 2015-2016 at Keithelmanbi Baptist Church* (9-12 February, 2016), 3.

be an Army post for providing security to its people from attacks. It was through the contribution of TBA, the people surrounding Motbung felt safe and secure during the ethnic clash. Even after the crisis, the Armies secured the people from many threats of the insurgency groups who always harassed the people. The Army post on the other hand till today help the public through philanthropic work by giving medical care to the poor in their dispensary and in the market places. They also sometime distributed education materials, even food and clothing to the needy and orphans.

4.2 CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS EDUCATION AND LITERATURE

TBA indeed had greatly contributed towards secular and theological literacy. The first Thadou primer called *Thadou Lekhabul/Ngulhao Lekhabul* written by Ngulhao Thomsong in 1927 can also be term as TBA's contribution.³⁴⁴ It was through *Lekhabul* every Thadous were able to read and write Thadou language.

4.2.1 Contribution towards Education (TBA Institutions)

The two institutions mentioned below were initially under the Education Department. But now they are both autonomous.

4.2.1.1 Baptist English High School

The Baptist English High School (BEHS) presently situated in TBA Compound, Motbung, was previously called Baby School. It was established in 1967 by Mr. Thangkhochon Thomsong and situated outside TBA Compound. The School was a private property in the beginning. The first Head Master (Superintendent) was Kurian Thomas from Hindustan Bible

³⁴⁴ Ngulhao Thomsong is the backbone of Thadou Churches. It was through his evangelisation that the first Thadou Baptist Church in Tujangvaichong was established in 1914. TBA esteemed him so much and regarded his Baptism on 1908 the beginning of Thadou Church History. Therefore through the initiation of TBA, Thadou Christian Centenary was celebrated on December 11-14, 2008.

Institute, Madras (Chennai).³⁴⁵ In 1970 Baby School extended its branch to Bolsang Village, and three teachers viz. P.J. Mathai, Th. Neishi and Lieni Kurian were appointed to teach there.³⁴⁶ The School remained as Baby School till 1980.

In 1981, the founder of the School Thangkhochon hands over the Baby School Motbung to TBA at an affordable price. Thus the School became a part of TBA property since 1981 and was relocated into the TBA campus. Sehlun Haolai was the then Head Master of the School and the School offered up to Class VIII. The School was fully established in 1984 and the name was changed from Baby School to Baptist English High School. Mrs. Phalkho was the first Head Mistress of Baptist English School. From 1989 the School offers up to class X and was recognised by the Board of Secondary Education, Manipur. BEHS presently have more than 300 students with 15 dedicated teachers.³⁴⁷ Thousands had accomplished their high School studies from this esteemed BEHS. Baptist School was the only School in the whole area till 2000, after which many schools came into existence.

Extension of Baptist School was open in Thenjang village in 1990. In those days Thenjang was quite a remote place and the people had to come and stay somewhere in the town to pursue education. Baptist School Thenjang branch eased the people's efforts and affords. The School plays a prominent role in uplifting the people in Thenjang and the surrounding villages. BEHS Thenjang School presently has around 200 students and is progressing well. TBA also opened another Baptist School branch at Songpijang village in 1991,³⁴⁸ and in Harup village in 1992.³⁴⁹ But both the Schools were defunct within a year or two because of the ethnic clash between Kukis and Nagas. Though TBA has a few Schools, the production of human resources within these 40 years is enormous. Baptist Schools produce many

³⁴⁵ Baby School, Salem Compound, Motbung; Appointment Orders No. 1/4/BS-68, Date 1-2-1969.

³⁴⁶ Baby School, Bolsang Branch; Appointment Orders No. 1/4/BS-68, Date 25-3-1970.

³⁴⁷ Interview with Paominlen Lhouvum, Principal Baptist English High School, on May 23, 2016.

³⁴⁸ Interview with Rev. Lunkholal Kipgen, Finance Secretary TBA, on May 23, 2016.

³⁴⁹ The 33rd TBA General Assembly 11-13 December, 1992, Resolution No. 21.

Government employees, Christian leaders, and teachers etc., who were and are right now the backbone of the tribe and the Church.

4.2.1.2 Ngulhao Theological Seminary

Ngulhao Theological Seminary was previously called Ngulhao Memorial Bible School (NMBS), after the name of Ngulhao Thomsong.³⁵⁰ It was established in 1958³⁵¹ in Phaicham and it was shifted to TBA Centre Motbung in 1961.³⁵² The vernacular Bible School was duly recognised by both the MBC and CNCNEI. With the growing needs of the Churches for higher Theological Education and to cope the students with the growing complex problems in the society, and to enable them to reach international standards, Ngulhao Memorial Bible School has been upgraded and named “Ngulhao Theological Seminary (NTS) in 1998.³⁵³

The Vision of NTS is “To impart the word of God to willing Christian men and women, and make them apply to transform the Church and society spiritually. The Motto is “Evangelization of South Asia.” The Theme is “Entrust to reliable people (2 Tim. 2:2).”³⁵⁴

In the early days, NTS offers a two year course of Certificate of Theology (C.Th). With its upgradation as Seminary, the College started offering Graduate of Theology (G.Th) since 1998. From 2013 the Seminary dissolved the C.Th course and lengthened the course from two years to three years and began offering Bachelor of Ministry (B.Min). From 2015 the Seminary offered Bachelor of Theology (in English). The B.Th programme is presently affiliated to Hindustan Bible Institution, Chennai.

³⁵⁰ Ngulhao Thomsong was the first Christian among the Thadous. He was also the main instrumental for the first translation and publication of Thadou New Testament and portions of Old Testament).

³⁵¹ D. Lhouvum, “NTS Background” *Ngulhao Theological Seminary Bulletin* Vol 5 (July, 2003), 1.

³⁵² Interview with Kaithang Singsit, Principal NTS, on May 23, 2016. NEKBAM leave KBC in 1965 because NMBS was shifted from Phaicham to Motbung. If this is the case, the shift of NMBS can be around 1963/1964. Written source is not available.

³⁵³ Ngulhao Theological Seminary, Prospectus (2000), 1.

³⁵⁴ Ngulhao Theological Seminary, Prospectus (2015), 5.

For those who cannot afford to go to Bible College outside Manipur; for those who cannot leave their family; for those who does not have a secular degree; NTS is an adequate training centre to equip themselves theologically and spiritually. NTS has been functioning as the training centre for a great number of Pastors, Church Leaders and Evangelists among the Thadou Community in North East India and beyond. Out of hundreds of graduates, many graduated student from NTS pursue their studies in another Seminary and are right now serving as Pastors in Association, College Lecturers, Missionaries and Evangelists all over India.

4.2.2 Contribution towards Christian Literature

Ngulhao Thomsong was the pioneer of Thadou secular and Christian literature. Apart from *Lekhabul* (Thadou Primer), Ngulhao also wrote and translated *Pathen La* (God's song) in 1922, *Thukidong le Kidondonbut* (Question and Answer) in 1924, *Pathen Thu* (God's Word) in 1925, *John Sut Kipana Thupha* (Gospel John) in 1925, *Lung Phatvet* (Hearts Mirror) in 1930, *Rome Mite Henga Paul Lekhathot* (Epistle to the Romans) in 1933 and *Thulhun Thah* (New Testament) in 1942.³⁵⁵

4.2.2.1 Thadou Bible (Text)

The first Thadou Kuki New Testament was translated by Ngulhao Thomsong with the help of Dr. and Mrs. Crozier with the permission of British and Foreign Bible Society and it was released in 1942. Previously the Thadou-Kuki bound copies of the Gospel of Luke, John and Acts of the Apostles was printed and published in 1926.³⁵⁶ Ngulhao was in the opinion that the Bible should be printed as NT in Thadou. But Mrs. Crozier insisted that it should be name Thadou Kuki, because Thadou is just a single tribe among Kuki tribes, and since the rest

³⁵⁵ Seikhohao Kipgen, *Thadou-Kuki Literature Khantou Machal - A Brief History of Thadou-Kuki Literature* (Imphal: Thadou Kuki Literature Society (TKLS), 2011), 3.

³⁵⁶ Zeliang, *History of Christianity...*, 123.

tribes does not have a Bible till that time, they will be using Thadou Bible.³⁵⁷ The Bible Society of India later took charge on the publication of Thadou Kuki NT from its establishment in November 1, 1944. The Thadou Kuki New Testament had been reprinted in the year 1950-51. The former was revised by Mid-Mission.³⁵⁸ Apart from BSI, TBA also had a link with Trinitarian Bible Society and therefore Bible Society Auxiliary Branch of Trinitarian Bible Society was opened at Motbung. The Bible Society again help in printing the review of Thadou New Testament done by Pu Thangkhochon Thomsong in 1973,³⁵⁹ and it was released on August 4, 1974.³⁶⁰

From the time Tonkhothang Kipgen, the first TBA President, held the Presidential post, his main objectives was to have a Holy Bible in Thadou. To accomplish the Thadou Bible project Thadou Christian Literature Society was formed in 1969 to continue the translation of Holy Bible which was already started by Ngulhao. The translation work was done by a group of dedicated and talented people³⁶¹ who are specialized in the Bible, linguistic, expert in Thadou dialect and culture, in Christian ministry. The translation work was completed in 1976.³⁶²

Unfortunately due to the Thadou and Kuki crisis, BSI misunderstood the situation and was not in the opinion to publish and print the Thadou Holy Bible. As a result the relationship between TBA and BSI had been cut off. Moreover the relationship between TBA and Trinitarian Bible Society was lost. But in the year 2002 misunderstanding between TBA and BSI was solved and the process of printing the Thadou Kuki Holy Bible was once again

³⁵⁷ N.J. Nelson, "Dr. le Pi. G.G. Crozier Hinkho Thusim Lahchom – Brief History of Dr. and Mrs. G.G. Crozier" *55th Anniversary of the New Testament Bible in Thadou Kuki 1942-1997 Souvenir*, edited by S.N. Gangte (Motbung: TBA, 1997), 4.

³⁵⁸ Kangpokpi Field Report for 1950-51. *CBCA*, 1950-51, 51, quoted from Zeliang, *History of Christianity...*, 159.

³⁵⁹ Kipgen, *Thadou-Kuki Literature...*, 29.

³⁶⁰ Helien Kipgen Personal Diary, 1974.

³⁶¹ They are: Mangkho Thomsong (chief translator), S.L. Palal, Helien Kipgen, SL Palhou, Vumkam Kipgen, Letkhoseh Kipgen, Songkhohao Kipgen, thangpu Kipgen, Dr. Dongkho Singson, Seikholam, Vumthang Sitlhou, Satjasei, SL Dujang and Thangkholet Kipgen.

³⁶² Letter to Rev. Zaihmingthanga, Associate Director (Translation) BSI, Shillong on February 9, 2008 (No. 115/TBA:BSI(T)04-08), by Rev. Thangkholet Kipgen, Executive Secretary TBA, 1-2.

resumed. Thus, the final proof of the translated manuscript was made in Shillong during November 25 to December 5, 2007. The manuscripts were once again revised by a Revision Committee.³⁶³

The First Thadou Kuki Holy Bible published by BSI was released on December 13, 2008 during the Thadou Christian Centenary Celebration. The 2000 copies printed were sold off on the day it was released.

Unfortunately, the translation has many spelling and translation mistakes. Since it was against the norm of BSI to do the revision within five years of the first publication, the Bible was no more reprinted. With the elapsing of five years a group of theological students, expert in Thadou dialect, started the work of correction and revision from February 28, 2014.³⁶⁴ The revised Thadou Holy Bible was released on September 11, 2016 at Motbung Baptist Church.

Moreover, the relationship gap with Trinitarian Bible Society, London is once again bridged. Revision of the Thadou New Testament was once again done as per the requirement of TBS, and the TBS printed the Thadou N.T. 10,000 copies free of cost and it was released at Motbung Baptist Church on November 24, 2014. The said NT was distributed free of cost to the Thadous. This was all through the initiation of TBA and now the Thadous have the privilege to read the word of God in their own dialect.

4.2.2.2 Thadou Audio Bible

Considering the old, the visually challenged, the illiterate etc., TBA felt the need of having an Audio Bible to be listened by everyone who doesn't know how to read. With the permission

³⁶³ The Committee are: Seikholam Sithou, Vumthang Sithou, Thangkholet Kipgen, Sholun Haokip, Thanga Singson, SL Paocha, Nengneihling Simte, SL Haokhomang and Paominlen Kipgen. Letter to Rev. Zaihmingthanga..., 3.

³⁶⁴ They are Rev. Vumthang Sithou, Kaithang Singsit, Paogoulen Lhouvum and Paominlen Kipgen. Vumthang Sithou, ed, "Thu Chomchom" *TBA Thuphon*, Vol I/14 (January - March, 2014), 18.

of BSI Audio Bible Recording was done in Shillong on September 19 to October 5, 2015;³⁶⁵ proof listening was done on October 17-30, 2016 at Keithelmanbi Baptist Church, and Re-recording on December 21-22, 2015 and January 18-24, 2016 at Imphal.³⁶⁶ The Thadou Audio Bible was made in three formats, viz. SD Card, CD and Solar Device MP3. 7500 copies of different format were released on December 3, 2016 at Keithelmanbi Baptist Church. Thousands of people who cannot read and have no time to read the Bible now have chance to listened and meditate on the word of God.

4.2.2.3 Christian *Labu* (Christian Hymnal)

Composition of Thadou Hymn book started from 1917. Pettigrew reported in 1917, “To make the Gospel message sound among the hills in song as well as by the mouth, a hymn-book in the Thadou language has been composed, and is now in the hands of the printer.”³⁶⁷ Pettigrew report in 1922 again stated, “Three hymn-books in three different languages – Tangkhul, Manipuri, and Thado – had been enlarged, revised and sent to the press.”³⁶⁸ Vumthang added, “Ngulhao with other Thadou Christian compile translated songs and make a hymn-book, where the name of each composer was put under their respective hymns. The hymn-book was edited by William Pettigrew and was published at the Mission School Libraries, Ukhurul and Kangpokpi, Manipur, in 1922.”³⁶⁹ But the hymn book was just a collection of few songs.

During 1925-1926 the need of having a larger Christian song book arose in the mind of some Thadou Christian leaders. So a group imminent religious leaders - Ngulhao, Seikholet, Longkhobel, Helkhup, Pakho and Theba start collecting hymns from various hymn books

³⁶⁵ The Artist who did the recording were Khupthang, Thangkai, Paogin, Robert, Tintin, Sesei, Henminthang, Kaigoulun, Seijang, SM Haopu, Paominlen Lhouvum, Paogoulun, Nehminlen, Lunneo, Kaithang, Nengnou, Boinu, Lhilhing and Tintin.

³⁶⁶ S.M. Haopu, *Annual Report of Mission Department, TBA-I, during the 56th Annual General Assembly 2015-2016 at Keithelmanbi Baptist Church* (9-12 February, 2016), 1.

³⁶⁷ *ABFMS: ABMC Report II*, 1917, 21-24.

³⁶⁸ *ABFMS 1922: One-Hundred-Eight Annual Report*, 92-5.

³⁶⁹ Vumthang Sitlhou, “Thadou te lah’a Gospel...”, 32.

along with the songs already collected by Ngulhao and Pettigrew. The collected hymns were compiled into a book and was entitled *Christian Labu* (Christian Song book/Hymn book). Under each song was written the name of the composer. Many hymns were later added to *Christian Labu* with compositions by Pu Lunneh, Pu Palal, and Pu Thangkai in 1946.³⁷⁰ Kipgen supplemented,

These people were pioneers and pathfinders in this field. They had cut the first stones for the edifice in conquering printing, socio-educational and gospel literatures in Thadou dialect. The role played by the missionaries and the local hymnologists in translating the hymns has its own unique importance in the field of literature. They made a stupendous victory in mastering the language especially in setting down the right literary technique.³⁷¹

The latest revised and enlarge edition of *Christian Labu* with Tonic Solfa which consists of 557 hymns was released on December, 23, 2015.³⁷²

The composition and translations of the *Christian Labu* based on the principles of Christian faith and doctrine of the Bible greatly contributed to the growth and development of contemporary Thadou literature. It also helps the believers in praising and worshipping the Lord, and helped them develop and grow spiritually. *Christian Labu* is still and will always be used among all the Thadou especially during Church worship service.

4.2.2.4 *Lathah Bu* (New Song book)

Not only S.L. Palal³⁷³ translated many hymn into Thadou, he also worked laboriously day and night both in composing and translating songs written in various dialects. His marriage with Hatkholhing was of great help especially in the field of literature. She hailed from the district of Churachandpur in Manipur state which is a melting pot of different dialects and languages.

³⁷⁰ Kipgen, *Thadou-Kuki Literature...*, 7.

³⁷¹ Sheikho hao Kipgen, *Tribal Literature in Manipur: Growth And Development Of 'Thadou-Kuki'* (Imphal: Thadou-Kuki Literature Society, 2011), 27.

³⁷² Vumthang Sithou, *Annual Report of General Department TBA-I, during the 56th Annual General Assembly 2015-2016 at Keithelmanbi Baptist Church* (9-12 February, 2016), 2.

³⁷³ See 2.4.5

She fruitfully utilised her knowledge of several dialects by helping her husband in the work of translating many of the gospel songs collected from different persons and from different parts of the land especially from Lushai and Hmar. The composed and collected hymns and lyrics of Palal were compiled into what is now called *Lathah Bu*. Literally, *Lathah* means ‘new songs’ and *Bu* means ‘book’. Originally the song book was known by the name of its compiler and was called ‘Palal Labu’. Even the initial publication of the book in 1949 was borne purely from his own pocket. Being a lover of music and songs he was also an expert in playing Mandolin and Guitar known as *Silangdah* in local dialect. In those days since the native populace have no access to a branded musical instrument he used to make it himself.³⁷⁴

The latest edition of *Lathah Bu* have 350 songs translated from different dialect.

Apart from Church Worship, *Lathah Bu* is mainly sung in various occasions such as social gathering during Christmas, Good Friday, Esther Sunday, Funeral, Fellowship, Public raise and Worship, etc. These spiritual songs composed by various local spiritual men and women of God are always evergreen. Since most of the songs in *Lathah Bu* were devotional songs, singing these songs keeps the believers really close to God.

4.3 CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS MISSIONARY WORK

The establishment of TBA Mission and Evangelism Department is already discussed in 3.6.2.1. TBA presently works among different people in Manipur, Assam, Nepal and Myanmar. Out of its many missionary fields among the different people, this topic will deal on its missionary contribution among the Thadou people.

4.3.1 Missionary Work among the Thadou in Manipur

The foundation of Christianity among the Thadou is mostly through people movement. Not only the failure of *Thadou Gal* (1917-1919) led to mass conversion, a Thadou village being

³⁷⁴ Kipgen, *Tribal Literature in Manipur...*, 39.

govern by the power of the village chief, if the chief of the village becomes a Christian and proclaimed Christianity should be the religion of the village, every villager automatically becomes Christian without knowing about Christian belief. There were more nominal Christians than true born again Christians. Christianity also becomes an inheritance; the children inherit from their parent. If the parent is a Christian, the children just become a Christian, a Christian by name. Therefore evangelistic work among the nominal Christians and relapsed Christian becomes the essential need among the Thadou.

While extending its mission work among the people of other faiths, TBA never missed to focus on its people. The Association keeps on sponsoring local evangelists to work among its people. According to the latest report, TBA at present has four local evangelists working entirely among the Thadous, and another four working among the Thadous and other tribes in Manipur.³⁷⁵ These evangelists conduct crusades, evangelistic camps, Bible camps, Revival camps, Youth camps, Women's camps, Men's camps, Children's camps etc. in different Churches. Crusades and camps are also conducted in family, by the name 'Home Crusade'. This evangelistic ministry among its people help them revitalized faith, which result in total surrender to the will of God.

4.3.2 Missionary Work among the Thadou in Myanmar

There are many Thadous in Myanmar. But, unfortunately most of the Thadous in Myanmar lost their identity among the Burmese. Apart from losing their language, custom and culture, they incorporated other faiths. Some are deeply rooted into Buddhism. Feeling the need of finding out their own people who are lost physically and spiritually, TBA opens a Mission field in 2000 known as Diaspora Mission Field, Myanmar. There are 11 Missionaries presently working in ten districts in Myanmar.

³⁷⁵ S.M. Haopu, *Annual Report of Mission Department TBA-I, during the 56th Annual General Assembly 2015-2016 at Keithelmanbi Baptist Church* (9-12 February, 2016), 3-4.

The Diaspora Missionaries in Myanmar not only preached the Gospel, but also teach them Thadou language, culture and tradition. Since they are totally illiterate about English alphabet (for the Thadou all over the world use English alphabet), the missionaries teach them how to read and write in order that they will be able to read Bible in Thadou and sing Thadou's song. Literature like Ngulhao *Lekhabul* (Thadou Primer), Thadou Bible and song books, and other books, and relief material and food supplies were also continuously supplied to them. TBA also opens a Diaspora home for the destitute and for the converts who were chased away from their home. The effort of TBA Diaspora Mission not only helps many came to realise their identity, but also thousands of souls have been saved so far.

4.3.3 Missionary Work among the Thadou in Different Cities of India

Thadous are scattered in every town and cities of India. Some have permanently settled but most of them are Government employers, private job holders and students etc. So these people who are far away from their home and Church have no place to have fellowship. Some people attended different churches or fellowship where they find it suitable without much satisfaction. In order that Thadou people may have fellowship among themselves, TBA starts establishing Thadou Christian Fellowship (TCF) Church in the cities.

So far only two Church have been established, viz. Thadou Christian Fellowship, Bengaluru on December 13, 2015³⁷⁶ and Thadou Christian Fellowship, Delhi and NCR on May 11, 2015.³⁷⁷ TBA appointed one pastor for each Churches. Thadous who are away from home now have a chance to gather and have fellowship, praise, pray and preach in their own dialect. It is a goal of TBA to establish Thadou Christian Fellowship in every cities of India within and abroad.

³⁷⁶ V. Sitlhou *Annual Report of General Department, TBA-I, during the 56th Annual General Assembly 2015-2016 at Keithelmanbi Baptist Church* (9-12 February, 2016), 4.

³⁷⁷ Interview with S.M. Haopu, Secretary Mission and Evangelism Department, TBA on May 24, 2016.

These are few socio-economic, political, educational, literatures and missionary contribution TBA has made for the Thadou speaking Community and Thadou Churches. The people enjoy the product to grow spiritually and physically, but, fail to give the credit and recognize the Association's hard labour. The contributions are not appreciated and Association's quality doesn't seem to have much impact on the people. This is mainly because of the diverse denomination and numerical quantity of its member and Churches. TBA's contribution will be recognized, appreciated and credited when the Association develop and grow both qualitatively and quantitatively.

CHAPTER – 5

EVALUATION ON THADOU BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Thadous are the second largest community in Manipur preceded only by the Meiteis. TBA was established with an objective to unite all the Thadou churches for closer fellowship and services. TBA indeed also had accomplished much for the development of the Thadou community through the various contributions mention in the previous chapter. Still than after all these years of struggling, TBA is still one among the least developed Association in the Thadou tribe. Till today the number and member of Churches did not grow much as it was intended and expected to be. Not even twenty-five percent of the whole Thadou population embrace TBA. Therefore the Association has a lower number of workers, missionaries and evangelist with a lower pay in comparison to the other Associations, and the few contributions it has for the community also go unrecognized and unappreciated.

What hinders the development of TBA? What has to be done to develop TBA? Upon enquiring and questioning, the researcher finds out the following problems to be the main reasons behind the sluggish development of TBA.

5.1 FORMATION OF KUKI BAPTIST CONVENTION

With the increase of Christianity in Manipur the churches were divided into Associations. Likewise the Kuki³⁷⁸ Baptist was also grouped themselves into two Associations according to their location. The North West Kuki Christians form KBA, and the North East Kuki Christians form NEKBAM. The two Associations joined together and formed Kuki Baptist Association on March 16, 1958. But due to controversies over land and language KBC was

³⁷⁸ KBA and NEKBAM is highly dominated by the Thadous. But for the sake of the other tribes, Kuki was use to name the Association. Many a time the Thadou – Kuki is use to denote the people in KBA and NEKBAM. But the writer here prefers to omit the word Thadou – Kuki in order not to confuse the readers.

again declared dissolved by both the Associations on January 3, 1967.³⁷⁹ However KBC still exists by transferring its Office to Imphal.

With the continual existence of KBC, KBA/TBA not only lost many of its many important documents and movable properties, it also lost quite a number of its members and Churches. The decrease of the strength of its members, churches and properties hamper the development of TBA in its long run.

5.2 POLITICAL ISSUES

Separation of church and government/politics is one among the Baptist distinctive. But religious organisation TBA cannot escape from political infiltration. This has a lot of impact on the Association that it hampers both the qualitative and quantitative development. The two main political hindrances are Tribal identification and Clannism.

5.2.1 Tribal Identification

The most destructive factor that hinders the development of TBA is identity and language issue. As per the Schedule Tribe notification order in 1956,³⁸⁰ all the Thadou speaking people in Manipur³⁸¹ are grouped as Thadou tribe. All the non-Nagas in Manipur hills: Aimol, Anal, Baite, Chothe, Chongthu (Songthu), Chiru, Gangte, Hmar, Khongsai, Kom, Koireng, Koren, Lamkang, Lushei, Mayon, Mate, Monsang, Paite, Purum, Ralte, Simte, Sukte, Thadou, Thangkhal, Vaiphei, Zou, etc are collectively known as Kuki or Kuki tribes. Today many Thadou Speaking people forgot about the first Thadou³⁸² and put much emphasize on the

³⁷⁹ Haolai, *KBC Thuchin Bu...*, 92.

³⁸⁰ Government of India, Ministry of Law Notification Order No. SRO-24777-A, Dated 29th October, 1956

³⁸¹ The following clans speaks Thadou dialect: Guite, Doungei, Sitlhou, Singsit, Kipgen, Haokip, Lotjem, Haolai, Tuboi, Sah'um, Khuolhou, Lupho, Lumpheng, Misao, Mate, Baite, Lhungdim, Ngailut, Kilong, Insung, Jongbe, Lunkim, Lenthang, Thangeo, Changsan, Lhang'un, Khuongthang, and Hanghal. Reconciliation Forum "Reconciliation Forum Special" *Eimi Times*, 30 March, 2016, 5.

³⁸² See Chapter 1, 1.2ff.

second Thadou, the ancestor of the some clan such as Haokip, Kigen, Sitlhou, Singsit etc., whose period was just around 1000 AD only. While emphasizing on the second Thadou, the other clans finds no space for them to be included in the Thadou tribe. Grabbing this opportunity, they hold on the term Kuki as their own and applied the term Kuki to the Thadou speaking group, and thus, diminished the nation Kuki to just a single tribe. They also try to make the Thadou language as Kuki language and named the translation of Holy Bible into Thadou as “Kuki Reference Edition.” Doing so, they drive out most of the tribes under the nomenclature Kuki. Therefore, other Kuki tribes disown the term Kuki and now are called by their individual tribe’s name and some joined the Naga folk. They also insisted to the Government of India to recognize the nation Kuki as a tribe, and indeed Government of India in the constitutional Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 2002 No.10 of 2003, (f) in part X entry 33 has re-introduced ‘Any Kuki Tribes’ in Manipur³⁸³ which had been earlier deleted from the tribe lists in 1956.³⁸⁴

This revert the processes of sectarianism and schism among the Thadou society and led to split or division among the Thadou speaking groups. With the change of the whole picture, each clan have equal right to call their identity as well as their dialect or the ‘Thadou language’ (Thadou *pao*) after each of their clan or ancestor’s name, as for instance – DOUNGEL-KUKI, MISAO-KUKI, LUNKIM-KUKI, etc. and DOUNGEL-pao, MISAO-pao, LUNKIM-pao, etc.

³⁸³ The Gazette of India- Ministry of Law and Justice (Legislative Department) New Delhi; the 8th Jan. 2003/Pausa, 8,1924. (Saka). The Schedule Cast and Schedule Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act,2002.No.10 of 2003,p. 6.

³⁸⁴ Government of India Schedule Tribes list of Part C States Order of 1951 were: 1) Any Kuki Tribes, 2) Any Naga Tribes and 3) Any Mizo Tribes. The tribes that are included in the “Any Kuki Tribes” in 1951 were: Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Koireng, Kairao, Kom, Lamkang, Maring, Monsang, Mayon, Paite, rum, Ralte, Simte, Suhte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou, Mate. But with the reshuffle of tribe list in Manipur in the year 1956, the 22 tribes were recognized as separate tribe each, since they have their own culture, tradition and language. The “Any Kuki Tribes” that was recognized in 2003 does not include all the above tribes that previously belongs to “Any Kuki Tribes”, but included the clans which are under the Thadou tribes. Reconciliation Forum “Reconciliation Forum Special...”, 2-3.

respectively. Thus, it is seen that haphazard categorization caused ethnic divergence among the Thadou resulting in conflict, tension, disunity and even enmity among themselves.³⁸⁵

Thus many people today felt it hard to embrace Thadou, and this hinder the development of Thadou Baptist Association very much. Also, the Thadou who are presently now in TBA owns Thadou too much as only theirs that it's hard for those outside TBA to embrace Thadou as their tribe and join the Association. Moreover members in TBA give too much priority to Thadou than Christ that it sometime creates problems in the Association and the ministry goes crooked.

Therefore, a fresh look on scheduling the tribes by the Government could either solve or lessen the controversy. Or, if all the Thadou speaking people think for the future of their posterity and the positive aspect of unity and nationalism, and once again unite themselves by accepting Thadou as their tribe and Kuki their nomenclature as of old, the Thadou religious organization TBA will see better development.

5.2.2 Clannism

The Thadous are clan centric. The clan listed in the Thadou tribe are major clans. It was during their migratory movement that the process of clan formation or lineage segmentation began when they settled in different parts. In course of time, the leading clans had been transformed into tribes and out of clans, many sub-clans and lineage segments emerged.

Clanism is exclusive and therefore not healthy for any society. It causes division and disunity among the people inside and outside the Churches and Association. Since the attachment people have towards their own clan is much more powerful than their attachment to the

³⁸⁵ Seikhohao Kipgen, "Political and Economic History of the Kukis of Manipur" (Ph.D Thesis, Manipur University, 2005), 317

Churches and God, it won't be a mistake to say that the division of the Thadou society into many Associations is the result of clannism. It is appropriate when some say, "TBA is form by Sitlhou and Lhouvum clan; Thouthang, DOUNGEL and DIMNGEL clans formed the Chongthu Baptist Association (Ch.BA); Lunkim, Lenthang, Lhangum, Chongloi and Hangshing KCC; and KBC belong to Haokip clan;"³⁸⁶ and indeed they are majority in each of the Association. There are people who are willing to die for TBA, KBC, KCC, Ch. BA/CBCA, etc., but it's not sure whether there will be anyone willing to die for Christ.

Clannism is hazardous not only in creation of many Associations; it also plays its main role in the appointments and allocation of leaders/workers in the Association. It conceived partiality and as a result a person of a particular clan is preferable than the other. TBA is rather clan centric than Christ centric. Quality lost its chance and quantity took its root, and thus the majority wins. This stumbled the Association many a time. This clan system is deep rooted in the mind of the people and thus the instinct of "You" and "Me", "You belongs to..." and "I belong to..." causes misunderstanding and division in the Churches and Associations.

Clan feeling is not an ideal theory to be propounded or professed among the people especially among Christian. Adhering to such politics of clannism is digging one's own grave, as is nothing but a reflection of spiritual immaturity. One must not ignore the fact that they are the same people and one in Christ. So, instead of looking on a particular people of their own clan, let the TBA look unto the Lord and ask him to supervise them in their administration for the development of TBA. Moreover, the Thadou people also should know that, on closer scrutiny of the clan's structures, cultural traits including folktales, legends and languages, they are one and the same people.

³⁸⁶ Haokip, "Kuki Churches Unification Movements...", 41.

CONCLUSION

The Thadou community that flourished as a nation and ruled over so many lands is now regarded as a mere tribe in India and Myanmar. It is even denied and denounce by its own people. It is being deprived from its rightful ownership and inheritance. Presently many people are in the opinion of even changing the name. There is likely a chance that Thadou can be extinct. It is growing rather downward than upward. But there are individuals and societies who are willing to sacrifice their life to prevent and protect their identity, culture, customs and traditions. TBA is one among them.

Thadou Baptist Association was established to safeguard the spiritual life of the Thadous, to unite the Thadou physically and spiritually, and to let the Thadous work together for the extension of the kingdom of God in 1950 as KBA. But with the establishment of another Association by different tribes in Kuki, KBA was once again organized particularly for the Thadou people and the name change to TBA in 1971. TBA keeps on accomplishing its aims and objectives, vision and missions; though not fully yet, is still striving for its fullness.

Unfortunately people felt it hard to embrace TBA, though there are 2,15,913³⁸⁷ Thadous in Manipur. This is due to difference in denomination. Christianity in Southwest Manipur is brought in by Welsh Presbyterian Missionary. Though Thado-Kuki Pioneer Mission was an independent interdenominational mission, the people embrace Presbyterian and Evangelical as their denomination. There are people who are deeply rooted in Association like Christian Church, Fundamental, Pentecostal, Revival, Salvation Army, Roman Catholic, Judaism, etc., and it is hard for them to become a Baptist just because they are Thadou. Even the Thadou speaking group in Baptist are divided into three Associations, viz. Thadou Baptist Association, Chongthu Baptist Churches Association, and Kuki Baptist Convention (formerly

³⁸⁷ <http://manipurtalks.com/index.php?threads/scheduled-tribes-population-of-manipur-as-per-2011-census.7240/>. Accessed on 14/1/2016.

KBA, NEKBAM and KBC). This is mainly due to tribal identity and clan issues. Though these three groups of people speak the same language and have one culture, they hold their identity separately as Thadou, Chongthu and Kuki. Due to this reason the Kuki that was once a nation that comprises of more than 31 separate tribes³⁸⁸ including Thadou and Chongthu, is degraded as a tribe, equivalent to Thadou and other tribes in 2003.³⁸⁹ Moreover the financial condition of TBA does not attract others. These are few among the many reasons that hinder the growth of TBA among the Thadou itself.

TBA is developing physically and spiritually. Church members and believers keep on growing in the Church through the ministry of Pastors, Missionaries and Evangelists. The believers are maturing and unselfish in this generation than in the early days. Church plantation is in full swing in the mission field as well as among the Thadou. Outward progress is seen in the Head Office, Institutions and in the local Churches through the renovations of buildings. The Association is now more apt to giving than begging. Workers are more qualified now than in the past. Theologically trained, dedicated and qualified servants of God are being appointed every year. Missionary field is extended and more missionaries were sent day by day in order to fulfil the commission of Lord Jesus. The Theme of TBA 'Go and Preach' is being carried on regularly.

Though most of the time TBA is not recognized and appreciated by the people, TBA's contribution for the tribe is enormous. Holistic ministry is done through feeding the physical hunger and thirst of its people especially in Myanmar, Assam and Manipur accompanied by feeding their spiritual life through producing Bible both in text and audio, song books,

³⁸⁸ 1. Guite 2. Doungel 3. Sitlhou 4. Singsit/Singson 5. Kipgen 6. Haokip 7. Chongloi 8. Hangsing 9. Lamhao/Touthang 10. Lotjem 11. Haolai 12. Tuboi 13. Sa'um 14. Khuolhou 15. Lupho 16. Lumpheng 17. Misao 18. Mate 19. Baite 20. Lhungdim 21. Ngailut 22. Kiloung 23. Insun 24. Jongbe 25. Lunkim 26. Lenthang 27. Thangngew 28. Changsan 29. Lhangum 30. Khounghang and 31. Lhanghal/Hanghal.

³⁸⁹ The Gazette of India- Ministry of Law and Justice (Legislative Department) New Delhi; the 8th Jan. 2003/Pausa, 8,1924. (Saka). The Schedule Cast and Schedule Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act,2002. No.10 of 2003, p. 6.

preaching and teaching. TBA is struggling to seek out the lost physically and spiritually. Diaspora mission work in Myanmar and in cities of India is carried on. Its contribution especially in regards to education and literature is a legacy. The educational Institution both secular and theological has shape the future of many people, and the literature (Bible and song book) it produced in written and audio edifies and nourished hundreds and thousands of people everyday.

Even though Missionary work is carried on, there are many people yet to be reached and share the gospel within its mission field. Some of the ways to reach them are personal evangelism, home evangelism, mass evangelism, and also through other means like the use of literature, audio ministry and visual ministry, etc. Holistic ministry should have to be emphasized more in the mission field.

Above all TBA need to loosen their grip on Thadou and tighten their grip on Christ. The Association needs to be more Christ centred than tribe and clan centred. Though they were once the sustainer of Thadou tribe, it's now a time for them to loose their grip on Thadou and leave it in the hand of the social and political organization. The more they hang on to Thadou, the less they produce spiritual fruit, and they are enemy to the anti-Thadous. Rather, each worker and members should regarded TBA as an Association where they grouped themselves to work together to extend God's kingdom. Looking unto Jesus, let every things be done to glorify God than to glorify themselves.

Finally, since TBA is run by the support of the local Churches, every Local and Centre Churches should give more attention to the Association, to the infrastructure, workers, and missionaries. Knowing that the development and progress of the Association depends on them, the churches should extend more help and support in deeds and in words for the development of Thadou Baptist Association.

APPENDIX - 1

Thadou Baptist Association – India Workers (2016-2017)

Address:

TBA Mission Lane
P.O. Motbung – 795107
Sadar Hills Autonomous District,
Manipur – India.

Email ID: tba@gmail.com

Honorary Officers:

1. S.L. Paojagin, President
2. Tongmang Kipgen, Vice President

Administrative Officers:

1. Rev. Vumthang Sitlhou,
Executive Secretary
2. Rev. Lunkholal Kipgen,
Finance Secretary
3. Pastor. S.M. Haopu,
Mission Secretary
4. Mrs. Nengnou Simte,
Women & CED Secretary
5. Mr. Paogoulun,
Youth & Education Secretary
6. Mr. Kaikhothang Singsit,
Principal NTS
7. Mr. Paominlen Lhouvum,
Principal BEHS

Pastors:

1. Rev. Letkam Sitlhou,
K. Geljang Area
2. Rev. Kailal Hangsing, Kangpokpi
C/C & Keithelmanbi Area
3. Rev. Kaikhojang Simte,
Motbung & Twipajang Area
4. Pastor. Jangneimang Kipgen,
Twilang Area
5. Rev. Ngamhao Touthang,
Moreh C/C
6. Pastor. Seikam Singson,
Monglenphai C/C &
Churachandpur Area
7. Pastor. Lettinsoi Singson,
Jiribam Area
8. Pastor. Kaigoulun, Imphal C/C

Office Staffs:

1. Minthang, Office Assistant
2. Kaigin, Chowkidar/peon
3. Thangtinlen Lhouvum, Driver

Study Leave:

1. Pastor. Paominlen Kipgen (June
2015 – 2017 March) for M.Th. at
COTRTS, Vizag.

APPENDIX – 2

Presidents and Executive Secretary of TBA since its re-organisation in 1971

Presidents:

1. Tongkhothang Kipgen
(1971-1972)
2. Vumlun Haokip
(May – December, 1972)
3. Khuppao Missao (1973-1975)
4. Henkholen Sitlhou (1976)
5. K.H. Paokhosem (1977-1979)
6. Lamkholen Kipgen
(1980-1982)
7. S.K. Lhunkam (1983-1985)
8. S.L. Seimang (1986-1987)
9. Vumkam Kipgen (1988-1989)
10. Lhunkam Sah'um (1990-1996)
11. Seitinthang Kipgen
(1997-2001)
12. T.K. Siema Singson (1/12/2001-
2005)
13. S.L. Lamthang (2006-2009)
14. L. Tongpao (2009-2010)
15. D. Angel (2010-2011)
16. S.L. Paojagin (2012 till date)

Executive Secretaries:

1. Rev. Helien Kipgen
(1/1/1971 - 11/2/1982)
2. Rev. Satjasei (11/2/1982-2/4/1082)
3. Rev. Thangkholet Kipgen
(12/4/1982 - 15/1/1985)
4. Rev. Vumthang Sitlhou 16/1/1985-
10/5/1986)
5. Rev. Satjasei (10/5/1986-5/5/1988)
6. Rev. Vumthang Sitlhou
(6/5/1988 - 10/7/1996)
7. Rev. Thangkholet Kipgen
(11/7/1996 - 1/11/1998)
8. Rev. Vumthang Sitlhou
(2/11/1998 - 2000)
9. Rev. Thangkholet
(1/11/2011 - 2009)
10. Rev. Paotinlal Lhouvum
(2009 - 2010)
11. Rev. Khaikhothang Singson (2011-
October, 2012)
12. Rev. Lunkholal Kipgen (October,
2012 - February, 2013)
13. Rev. Vumthang Sitlhou
(February, 2013 till date)

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