8. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the research is based on the findings and suggestions from the study. The chapter discusses about the findings in brief and chapter wise systematically.

8.1. INTRODUCTION

The Kukis were one of the most effected ethnic groups by British colonialism. Besides the division of their settlement into three country (Bangladesh, India and Myanmar), the impacts are still reign in their religious concepts, custom, culture and clannism by terming New and Old Kuki. Originally the Kuki includes *Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Koireng, Kom, Lamgang, Maring, Any Mizo (Lushai) tribes, Monsang, Moyon, Paite, Purum, Ralte, Simte, Suhte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou, Tarao, Kharam* and *Any Kuki* Tribes. Ethnically, culturally, linguistically these people have common history, custom and cultural practices. As stated above, due to some unwanted external factors like colonization and ethnic politics, some Kukis are once politically under another ethnic group for some gain.

The *Kuki* people have unique identity found in their everyday traditional, festivals, custom, culture, art and crafts and institutions like *Som* and *Lom.* They have folklores, folktales, phrases, idioms, parables and proverbs that become one of the resources to study their past as they do not have any written record from their own.

The Kukis also have different types of god in their world. Among them (gods) *Chung-Pathen* or *Chung-Mangpa* is the supreme God. Whenever the Kukis performed sacrifices in order to regain health or to escape any adversity they mentioned different natural gods like mountain, water, trees, and stones etcetera and call the supreme God in the beginning and the end. As they cite different natural gods in their incantations, some historians or scholars argue that the *Kukis* were animists and worshipped nature in the form of spirit. In performing the rituals and rites, incantation like *"Blessed me as You blessed....* [refer the objects name]", *"Heavenly God and earth god...",* "Heavenly God" was always mentioned in the beginning and the end shows that the Kukis have one Supreme God who could blessed them. The Kukis accepted Christian belief from the preaching of Western Christian Missionaries.

The *Kuki* artists in early periods were traditional or hereditary artists. Their art and craft was highly based on traditional form of art under certain rules by custom, culture and belief. The traditional form of art which had been left by the ancestors was based on a strong foundation of social life. After the coming of Christianity, growing westernization influenced their traditional art forms. Many of their artefacts are disappearing mainly due to lack of preservation and ethnic clashes. Also, easy availability of a number of manufactured artefacts (especially plastic) has profoundly influenced these cottage industries negatively and in turn, livelihood of the artisans.

8.2. KUKI TRADITIONAL HOUSE

The Kukis are fully aware of their surrounding and its best suit dwelling, so, their traditional houses are different according to the region, climate, economical status and materials available. Their typical dwelling was constructed in no partition roomy structure, no window, one storey (lower part as a cattle pen) and front roofing protruded. The Kuki traditional house was constructed to protect the occupants from heat, cold, rain, wild animals, evil spirit and enemies.

The hearth of the Kuki traditional house was not only used for cooking of foods rice beer, but it also serves as a dais for sharing various family work plans. The house was built in a single roomy without partition so that a large participant's can occupy without making extra tents outside in any occasion. A large number of guests including family member can also used the whole floor for sleeping. In respect of space capacity, the Kuki traditional house in a single roomy serves convenient for all. Their house has no window and is totally dark event for a person who enter from outside at day time. To visualize the objects inside the house it takes more than five to ten minutes. Thus, from security point of view, it was impossible for the thief and enemy to enter the house and attack the house within few seconds.

a. Storey and Fencing

The Kukis build their house in one storey, which is not because of the sloppiness of the land. They built their house in the one storey structure even in the plain area. The upper floor was occupied by the family members and the lower part was for domestic animals like pig, dog, goad, cow, buffalo and mithun. To prevent the domestic animals from

wild animals and thieves, the house was properly fenced. One of the interesting parts is the acquiring of gunpowder from urine place at back platform. After excreted at the same place for more than decades by all family members, they acquired a chemical for gunpowder from the excretions.

Fencing the compound of a house with proper gate kept the occupants and domestic animals safe from enemies and thieves. It is not only the fence of the house, it also serve the fence for cattle. So, cattle cannot go out of the house compound and prevent them from thieves and wild animals attacked.

b. Front wall and Porch

Besides the one storey, the front roofing protruded was one of the distinctness of Kuki traditional house. The front wall of the Kuki traditional house decorated with animal heads and skulls killed by the man of the family became a trophy and give message to the visitors. Likewise, storing and displaying of food-supply like maize, corns, millet, beans, pumpkin etc. inside the house shows the status of women member of the house. It serves as a trophy for women, and such working hard woman, who could stored more than hundred baskets full of paddy rice performed *Chang-ai* festival, the highest celebration of agriculture by women.

The lower part of the verandah of Kuki traditional house was made in earthen because, pounding rice in wooden or bamboo floor makes noisy and uncomfortable. The dried fire woods kept in lower verandah helps the female member of the family who usually cook not to go outside at night time or on a rainy day. Also for emergency like attacked, everyone can catch up the firewood and use it as a first preventive weapon. The thatching roof was never remove and thatched new unless the house site was change. The thickness of the roofing maintained proper temperature of the house in any season.

c. Village site

The actual significance of the ritual performed for selection of village site by the use of “egg” was to know the proper wind movement and its directions. According to their belief, if the egg does not burst, they choose the site for settlement of village. I conducted an experiment by burning of an egg first with disturbed by wind and in full

furnace and second with proper wind movement uniformly furnace. The first experiment resulted to burst of egg at the bottom, and the second experiment shows proper burning of egg. Therefore, if wind direction and movement was proper at that particular site, the egg will not burst. The reason was because of the wind movement which disturbed the fire. The Kukis interpretation was according to their ritual belief. Scientifically, the primary performance was not about burst or proper burnt of an egg, but they are looking for the proper wind movement and its direction.

d. Village Gate site

The Kukis performed another ritual by cutting of *Ai* (a rhizome which has madecinal value) into two pieces for selection of village-gate site called *Khomol* or *Dongkot*. According to their belief, if both the two pieces of *Ai* faced downwards it is taken as good. Here, my argument is that, the position of two pieces after cutting depends on the force apply while cutting and the flatness of the *Ai*. While interviewing the elders I ask them a question about 'if one piece face downward and another piece toward somewhere' what will be the consequences? In this case all my interviewee were unable the answer my question. Some of them are simply saying "it is not bad, depend on the decision of the performer". Therefore, the ritual was performed to planted the Ai which has a madecinal value in their tradition.

e. House site

For selection of house site, a ritual was performed by rice in a cleaned space, a small quantity of rice (*Anchang)* was kept there for a night. If the place of rices were not disturbed, they think it as good and chose that very site for construction. The rice could be eaten up or misplaced where insects like ants and turmides are very common. According to them the place where ants and turmides can eat the rice at night is not good for construction of house, as ants and turmides can eaten up the house post and even the walls.

f. Thingkhokhap & Thingkho

The traditional Kukis hearth was always kept burning continue with *Thingkhokhap* (main firewood) and *Thingkho* (firewood). According to their belief, continuing burning of *Thingkhokhap* and *Thingkho* in the hearth signifies long life of the family

head and continuity of the family. Essentially, their traditional belief may have two distinct rationales. First, due to shortage of matches, they may keep their hearth burning continuously. Secondly, collection of *Thuhlukhap* or *Thingkhokhap* was the duty of all member of the family, especially head of the family as the wood was big a heavy. Therefore, they started a hoax by saying so, so that every members of the family can collect enough wood for the purpose.

g. Door and Floor

As we have discussed the making of *Kotpi* (Main Door), *Shutkhom* (Main Pillar) and *Lhongpeh* (Floor) in chapter two, it can be concluded that the Kukis are very advance in wood craft. The Kuki traditional door, main pillar and the wooden floor plate shows their advancement in wood craft.

h. Shelves

Interiorly, the Kuki traditional hanging shelves made from bamboo was unique and typical. The main purpose of the shelves was to dry food stuff and baskets. Even in rainy season, the Kukis can easily dry food stuff and yet their clothes in the shelves.

8.3. SCULPTURES AND MONUMENTS

Historically, Kuki traditional sculptures and monuments were started from the inception of their culture. Like various kings, emperors, advance nations, modern oppressors and inspirational statues conveyed various messages, the Kukis too have such type of Chiefs or leaders who gave various message about their custom, culture, religion, economy and politics through different way. Sculpture and monuments are one among them.

The Kuki communities in North East India erected stones or wooden totems to commemorate historic events, departed family or community members, honourable persons in the society and even to demarcate land and important places. All the Kuki sculptures and monuments of the past are mostly related with customs, culture, rituals etc. The idea which they incurred was their innovation in art, and the techniques became traditional techniques of art. The Kukis also traditionally have various

techniques of art like modelling, carving, casting and construction. Across time, they also have acquired various modern techniques in their sculptures and monuments.

a. Stone Sculptures

The traditional monuments and monoliths like *Lhansong* (memorial stone), *Gamgi Song* (border pillars), *Kho song* (village stone); *Molsong* (achievement stone) can be seen in every old Kuki village which are related with their customs and cultures. In some of the Kuki folktales and legends, sculptures in stone were mentioned by Kuki warriors who can be termed as 'monumental sculpture'. Only few standing Kuki traditional monuments and sculptures can be seen now due to various factors like lack of proper preservation, frequent shifting of village, short lifespan of materials like wood and destruction of properties by ethnic clashes are some of the most common factors.

b. Lhan-song

Commemoration of the departed family members or well known persons by erection of memorial stone was started from time immemorial. About various carved images in their traditional memorial slabs it was before 1890s. This was the second development stage of Kuki monuments and sculptures and become one of the communication characteristic. The status of the deceased person can be known from the images carved on the memorial slab. The third development stage was the used of scripts or alphabets. The period becomes one of the most important milestones in the history of the Kukis in different aspect, as it was the transition period when Christianity becomes their new religion. The use of script means there were some Kukis who knew how to read and write. Engraving of scripts on stones has been improved gradually with portraits and life size sculptures become the fourth and latest development stage of Kuki monuments and sculptures.

c. Moul-song

The exact period and the original tradition of erection of monumental pillar for success celebration were not known. The oldest successful sculptures found this day may be the monumental sculptures of Kuki legendry warrior *Galngam* still stands in *Hengkot* Village and *Kapei Range* of Churachandpur District, Manipur (P. Haokip 95-96).

Another success pillar known is the pillar of *Sa-ai*, *Chang-ai* and *Chon* made from locally-found wood called *Shithing*. Contemporary to *Shithing* sculpture, the Kukis also have stone monuments or sculptures with carved images of animals and birds they hunted. The monumental sculptures found at *S. Gelbung* site can be classified in three monumental sculptures such as *"The Elephant"* (still standing), *"The Chon"* (already broken) and *"The Sa-ai"* are found at the main and centre point of the village.

- ***"The Elephant":*** "The Elephant" (titled mine) is a monument which is found still in standing position at the centre of *G. Gelbung* village. The monument in a big stone with only engraved elephant image is about eight feet tall, two and half feet wide and above one foot thick. There is two version of belief about the monument, one being the largest domesticated animal of the *Chassads* and being the biggest animal they have killed. The period was around late 17th Century when the *Chassads* ruled south of Manipur valley and settled at *Thiengbung* hill range. It can be said that, the *Chassads* settled at *Thiengbung Hills* from late 17th Century to 1877. Therefore, the monumental sculptures will be more than 140 years old.
- ***"The Chon":*** Another monumental stone sculpture of *Chassad* is titled as "*Chon"* (for details see chapter 3 Sculptures and Monuments). According to the sources collected from village chief, Letkhosei Haokip and a village elder *Pu Chunglet*, the stone has an images like animals, man carrying a pot, a dancing girl with headgear, the big *mithun* and something looks like a tree leaves. The animal images depict the festival of Kuki traditional festival *Sa-ai*, and the dancing girl with headgear depicts the festival called *Chang-ai*.

d. Gamgi Song

Traditionally, the Kukis demarcated their respective land with erection of stone where there is no river and mountain range to demarcate. Border pillar was also erected in case of dispute boundary between two chief in the presence of committee consisting of more than two nearby chiefs, village elders and the village priest. A Border pillar is just a simple stone found in the nearby boundary. No images and scripts were inscribed on it.

e. Wood Sculpture

Wood is the foremost and most common medium in Kuki sculptures and monuments. Due to its short period of life span and non availability of written record it is difficult to say from when the Kukis started and where? But in most of their traditional sculptures and monuments wood is more common than stone. Among the woods used by the Kukis, *Shithing* is their primal tree or wood and used in many of their material culture.

f. Doikhom

The making of *Doikhom*, a pillar or totem used for hanging *Inn-Doi* was the duty of *Tucha* (descendants of married family girl) of the family. Here my argument is that 'every Kuki married man is *Tucha* in at least one family if his foremother and mother belong to the Kuki community. In the meantime, if making of *Doikhom* was the duty of *Tucha*, which means all married man who have a Kuki foremother or mother have the skill of making *Doikhom*. Thus, we can say all Kuki man had the skill of art and craft.

g. Thi-kong

The Kukis made traditional coffin called *Thi-kong* from single large, good and easy to carved tree. They carved out the desired size from the timber with one side bigger for head portion. A wooden plank cut out from the same timber was cut to the size of the coffin to cover the open coffin. This is due to their lack of experience in getting thinner and better number of wooden plank from a large timber and non-availability of saw for cutting woods. Therefore, a coffin made from only one large timber was vanished and now as they have the knowledge of making a number of wooden planks from one timber, they make better and proper coffin.

h. Contemporary Sculptures

The contemporary sculptures of the Kukis include traditional and academic style. The traditional styles of sculptures are made for their traditional in respect of technique, material and concepts like sculpted animal heads and horns for house decorations, totems, designs of pillar etc. Today, the profession of Kuki man is no more hunting except in far flung hilly areas and less number of big animal to hunt, they decorate their modern house with a sculpted animal heads with original horns.

But it has the same concept with actual killed animal heads and skulls used to decorated the front wall of house.

The modern or academic styles of sculptures are the sculptures made by the use of modern equipments and materials under certain procedure. Fibre casting sculptures is one of the examples of contemporary academic style sculpture. As they have the knowledge of working on fiber, they now produced number of sculptures and monuments by fiberglass. Some of the monumental sculptures in fiberglass are *Pu Ngulkhup Haokip* statue at *Lonpi* Village, Chandel district, *Pu Tintong Haokip* statue and *Nampi Kipumkhatna Maicham* (Statue of Kuki Integration) at *Songpi* Village, Churachandpur district made by *Mangcha Neishiel*. *Ngamkholen Haokip* has also worked on fiberglass in abstract forms all related with Kuki traditional themes. Some of Ngamkholen's work are "Bondage" in wood (Honorable Mention-2006-07 by Manipur State Kala Akademy), "Traditional Tune" in bronze (Manipur State Kala Akademi Art Award-2011) and fiberglass work like *Hunter* and *Hunting.*

i. Installation Art or Sculptures

The Kukis started installation of art since time immemorial. The most known Kuki traditional installation art was found in *Inndoi.* The components of different materials *(Vohpi dehkon, Kelchal kiheh, Um, Gopi chem, Gopi teng, Chaokol, Khaopi Lam-koh, Ahkang mul, Shithing, Vomgui, Thinghe, Gopi Pocha, and Gopi Tul)* have different meanings or symbolism in the Kuki religious perspective. All the above components having different meaning and significance are installed together and hung on the front porch of the house to make one religious symbol to worship their creator.

Another installation art was the totems made from different item used in their ritual services called *Hun-ahkangtha.* The various items include *Shithing, Shiboh, Gopi boh,* and *Ahkang mul.* In the ritual ceremony of *Chon* and *Sa-ai,* the installation items are *Shihing* in the form of pillar or post and a bundle of bamboo with its leaves. The numbers of bamboos in the bundle are made according to the number of killed animals. And the totem items of *Chon* have more long bamboo with leaves binding together than that of *Sa-ai.*

One of the most interesting installations of art in their ritualistic performance was that of *Kithoi.* Most of the items are made from clay. If the ritual was performed by sacrificing pig, there is a sculpture of pig, sculpted mithun for mithun, cow for cow and so on. The other items include sculpted image of man or woman in clay, flags made from different colours of thread in a macaque type of sculpture. According to their belief, the sacrifices were made to peace with the various evils which could make them sick (Neijalhing).

j. Monuments

The monuments of the past are crumbling due to naturally occurred prolonged head and rain, less cared, destructions of one's material culture in ethnicity politics. The development of monuments goes down after the coming of Christianity, and rapidly growth after the ethnic clashes of 1990s. Therefore, the coming of Christianity period and the 1990s ethnic clashes are two major important evolution or transition period in the history of Kuki traditional monuments.

The monuments to remember their dear ones or socio-cultural events are made from stone and local tree called *Shithing.* The monument made from *Shithing* tree being wood lasted for around 50 years long in outdoor. Therefore, many monumental pillars to commemorate the traditional Kuki events are no more seen today. *Selkhom* is a totem or monumental post of the Kukis in their traditional celebrations like *Sa-ai, Chon, Lom-selneh* and *Kut.* They mostly used *Shithing* tree for *Selkhom* because it was the only tree available in their locality which was the most durable even termites and insects could not harm the wood.

In *Phaikoh* village of Ukhrul, bordering with Myanmar, three monument posts *Pu Tongkhojang Haokip, Sa-ai* (*Selkhom*) 18-1-1976, *Pi Phalam, Chang-ai* (*Selkhom*) 18-3-1971 and *Pu Onkhothang Haokip, Sa-ai (Selkhom)* 12-3-1973 were made from Teak tree. The 40 year old monument posts are still in good condition. Only the carved textures and designs are not seen anymore. Another monument found in *G. Gelbung* village having the images of different animals and woman shows the monumental sculpture of *Chassad's Chang-ai, Sa-ai* and *Chon.* These stone monuments will be the oldest monument of the Kukis which is still available. From the above two monumental materials found used by the Kukis in their festivals, it is learned that, the Kukis are

capable of using any durable materials available in their surroundings. *Shithing* is not the only material used in their rituals and traditional monuments. Yes, in some region where there is no Teak and no knowledge of stone art, *Shithing* is the most durable material for their ritual and traditional monuments.

8.4. CRAFTS

As the Kukis have no written records of their past, it is difficult to mention the origin and initial period of cane and bamboo crafts in their society. The first known craft in Kuki culture is the used of *Pocha* in their *Indoi*. The time when every male from adolesent age knows the skill of making simple carrying basket called *"Kongvong"* is the most developing stage of Kuki craft. This is also the period that there was a saying *"Kongvong cha kam theilou pasal"* (man who cannot make even *Kongvong*) and such man are unpreviledged for marrying a good girl.

8.4.1. Bamboo

Bamboos used for making baskets are naturally soft and difficult to break like *Gova, Golhang, Gomi, Gopi.* The Kukis preferably used one or two year old bamboo for this type of crafts, which they called it *"ningkum peng"* (last year bamboo shoots). For house construction materials and large crafts, solid bamboos of two or more year's old called *"Ahsi kai"* (bearing star) are used.

The Kukis have a popular saying *"Thing umlou naá Go kimang".* The simple translation is "Bamboo served where there is no wood". From the above phrase, it is understandable that, bamboo is the alternative material for constructing a house where there is no enough wooden materials. That means for house construction wood is the primary material for the Kukis and bamboo served the secondary purpose. But, wood cannot replace bamboo for making of basket crafts where bamboos are not available. Therefore, the literal meaning of the saying defines that bamboo is more useful than wood.

8.4.2. Baskets

The three measuring basket found in every Kuki household has the same capacity and also same with the measuring baskets of the neighbouring. This practiced is as old as

barter system era which is passed on through generation to generation as is still followed. The same were used by the *Meiteis* and *Nagas* in Manipur. Therefore, it is sharing or borrowing in practiced, material and concept with their neighbouring ethnic groups. Besides the Kuki traditional baskets and its accessories mentioned above, there were also some traditional crafts made from bamboo in their everyday life which we cannot skip. The crafts are *Twithei*, *Thei-khong***,** *Lheng/Me-kong***,** *Me-khe/Go-khe***,** *Touna***,** *Sa-tul***,** *Ah-bom* et cetera.

8.4.3. Wood Craft

Traditionally, locally available woods like *Vongthing, Thinghe, Shething, Gelthing, Phunchongthing, Gangpithing, Leihaothing, Teithing, Laithing, Chehnouthing, Dolthing, Kheuthing* etc. are used for craft. Out of the four mortar used by the Kukis *Chotlep* and *Twi-changsu* is a typical Kuki mortar which no other ethnic groups used. Mechanically, both *Chotlep* and *Twi-changsu* consumes less human energy.

A very typical wooden crafts like tub, drum, coffin, *Chempai* (case for Dao) and Pumjap (air blower) shows the advancement and innovative ideas of the Kukis mechanically, technically and materially. A Spoon for scooping curry and rice is one of the very challenging craft for the Kuki man. If the spoon breaks while serving the food or rice male members of the family are not allowed to eat that food. Breakable spoon means male member of the family are careless while selecting the wood or while making it. As a punishment for their inability to make a good wooden spoon, they refrain themselves from taking that food.

8.4.4. Weaving and Handloom

The first education imparted to the Kuki girl was the learning of weaving skills. The *Kuki* women always give importance to their weaving tools and they take with them when they get married too. The clothes made in loin-loom consume time and labour than throw shuttle loom. The products of loin loom are not very profitable for the weavers, but, its finesses and durability has high feature. The *Kuki* women are not only advanced in loin-loom, they are also good in application of embroidery works. The latest development of weaving among the *Kukis* is the use of Computer Added Textile

Designing technology by *Ms. Roslyn Khongsai* and *Vahneithem Haokip* who have introduced the novel concept of computer technology to the *Kuki* textiles.

The different cloth designs of *Kukis* are copied from shades snakes, animals, birds, landscapes, flowers, stars, agricultural products etc. The common designs and names show their affinity. The pattern of snake (python) was woven in their traditional cloth called *Khamtang* or *Khamtlang* and *Thangnang. Khamtang* (Kham=down slope, Tang/tlang=upward slope) is also known as *Nuhmeipun* by *Kom, Ponchial Rulpuiyek* in *Aimol* and *Ponthal* by *Koireng.* Among the Kukis of Manipur *Koms* and *Aimols* are the first clan who used this cloth with designs and patterns in different colour. The *Thadous* started weaving of their *Khamtang* with designs and patterns around 1930s.

The design of *Changmaimu* (cucumber seed) is popularly used by the Kukis. The design was one among they copied from the snake. They are very fond of cucumber seed design, so they named the design after it. The colour pattern of *Puandum* evolved from the colours of the rainbow. The *Vaphol/Pholva* (Horn Bill) feathers patterns in black and white motif are used in *Ngotekherh* cloth. The *Thangnang* and *Saipikhup* have the design of *Gosem-jang.*

The cloth *Saipikhup* means "elephant-knee". The characteristics of elephant are on its ear, foot or footprint, trunk, tusks and akin. Why knee, what special character in knee, how the animal and its knee have a relationship with the Kuki culture, are some argument question. The elephant except for its big size does not have any relation with Kuki culture. Its knee does not have any special character in terms of wrinkle, curve and movement. The term "*Saipikhup"* is belief to be the twisted word of *Sampi-khup* (*sampi*=python, *khup*=downward facing) and later it became *Saipikhup.* According to *Kom's* version of a particular design, *Khamtang, Thangnang* and *Saipikhup* designs are taken out from a big snake they called *Gulpi* or *Sampi*. The design of *Khamtang* is taken out from the belly portion of the snake, *Thangnang* from the side and *Saipikhup* from the back while the snake was in free-faller (facing downward) position. It is also belief that because of the term *Sampi* (big snake) being dreadful to them to mention they twisted and called it *Saipi* and became *Saipikhup*.

8.4.5. Musical Instruments

The Kuki traditional musical instruments like Goshem, Dah, Pheiphit, *Pengkul, Khongpi, Lhemlhei, Theile, Selki, Pehkhong, Kengkle* etcetera are used for different occasions typically. As drum is the integral part of their music of all time, they cannot sing a song without it.

The Kuki traditional wind musical instrument *Goshem* is the most valuable and typical from other ethnic groups of North East India. The *Goshem* used in *Mizoram* with nine tubes has more notes than the seven tubes used in Manipur. It has six or seven different sound notes same with *Do Ray Me Fa So La Te Do* of Staff notation. They also once think that playing *Goshem* is against Christianity as it contains some evil praising words. If they used it for Christianity, it will not go against it. They almost lost their sole traditional musical instrument; luckily they now play some Christian songs by the used of *Goshem*. Another Kuki traditional wind musical instrument *Lhemlei* type is same with the musical instrument used by Tibetans, Myanmars, *Nepalese, Bodo* and *Adi* group of Assamese. The trumpet which is called *Pengkul* or *Sumkon* or *Totorot* by the Kukis was made from different sizes of bamboo called *Nat* tube.

Gongs, the core musical instrument of the Kukis also have a cultural value in their customary law. Among the capital assets of the Kukis like mithun, gong, necklace and rice, gongs are highly valued and it is the most valuable. According to the Kukis, *Dahpi* is very much valuable that it is compulsory in bride-price and *Longman* (ex-gratia or compensation paid to deceased family). Though gongs represent the core cultural item of the Kukis, it is not produced by them; it is borrowed from the neighbouring countries. Although gong is included in a bride price and *Longman* of the Kukis, it does not mean that the actual gong was given. They fixed the price of gong according to their ammicable talks and it is given in cash which depends on the area, status of both family and their relationship. It is very arguable that, ‘if every bride-price includes the particular real gong, the number of gong among the Kukis will be equal to the Kuki married women’. So, it can be given in kind or cash.

8.4.6. Costume and Ornaments

The Kuki traditional necklace in red beads or dark amber is the most valuable and highest price of women ornaments. The used of traditional necklace in Kuki culture

like *Longman*, *Numei man* (bride price), *Upa-naopa kilutna*, *Unu lutna* and *Nule-pa lutna* shows its high value in their culture.

No one knows about the origin of this red bead necklace and from where they import. Even those who sell the necklace do not know where it comes from. According to their belief, the red beads are a plant fruit. When burnt on fire there is no effect except a little change in colour. When broken into pieces by iron hammer in iron the pieces it looks like broken glass or hard stones. The non effects when burnt on fire and broken pieces shows the beads are not a fruit of plant, it is made from some valuable stone. Though it is popularly used in their culture and mentioned in their folktales, no Kuki artisans produced it, except the threading process. It is belief that the Kuki traditional necklace they used is imported from outside or a borrowed material somewhere from South East Asia continent.

The Kuki headdress used by women in Christian culture called "*Ponlukhuh"* is according to the First Corinthians chapter eleven of the Bible. The Kuki traditional crown *"Longchang"* is made from threading of a white mollusca shell, another headdress is made from hornbill feathers in black-and-white strips. The bracelet called "Chao" and armlet called "Hah" are also one of the ornaments of Kuki women when performing traditional dances.

Petticoat of Kuki women called *Nihsen* was once a very popular garment. It is saying that a piece of Nihsen tied in hand or head saved a person from bullet. Therefore, during the WW-I & II, where and whenever the Japanese Armies show this *Nihsen*, they divide among themselves as for bullet-proof.

8.4.7. Miscellaneous Crafts

The good earthen pots used by the Kukis in the olden days are made by the Kukis of Myanmar or Manipur Meiteis. They produced less earthen pot for their home used only. The Kuki traditional rice beer pots of different sizes have some special value in their culture. The making of *Pumjap*, the Kuki traditional air pump or blower used by blacksmiths, producing gunpowder and other war equipments shows their advancing capability in iron craft.

8.5. SYMBOLISM: MEANING AND CONCEPT

The Kuki traditional art and crafts have various symbolisms which represent ideas or qualities, and attribute to natural objects or facts. In respect of signs, meanings and concepts their art and crafts are bounded by their rich custom and culture. The Kukis have certain thing to do or not to do, symbols or signs to represent the good and the bad, a message with signs and symbols. All their interpretations, beliefs and superstitions are related in their social, cultural, customary, economic and political perspective.

8.5.1. Kuki Traditional House

a. Village site

The ritual performed by the Kukis for selection of sites for village, village gate and house was base on their belief and interpretation of natural facts. Although the Kukis believe the burst of the burn egg as a bad sign for settlement, the fire disturbed by wind is the main reason of egg burst. Actually, if egg is burned without any disturbance from wind and heated the uniformly, it is not burst. The Kukis performed and interpreted the ritual according to their belief but a place where proper wind movement and furnace is climatically and scientifically good for settlement.

b. Village gate

The ritual performed for election of village gate called *"dongkot"* by cutting of *Ai* is difficult to give an experimental proof as it depends on the way how *Ai* is cut and the flatness of the two pieces. Normally, thinner cut piece and flat surface has more chances of facing downward.

c. House site

In a ritual for selection of house site, if the rice kept in a cleaned space for a night is not disturbed, the site is said to be free from insects which are active at night and safe for humans and their crops. The place where insects and animals dislocated the rice in a night meant that there were insects and animals which are harmful or dreadful for the occupants. Generally, the Kuki traditional house faced the east because according to them the sun rise from the East is for life and the West was for death.

d. Trophies

As The Kukis socio-economy depends on hunting, cultivation and its celebrations, animal heads, skulls and horns, bird's feathers and the agriculture products became house decoration item like a trophy. It also symbolized the social and economic status of the family, especially the husband and wife. The displayed trophies also served as a communication to the visitors and their offspring. From the displayed trophies, visitors know the status of the occupants and gave respect and honor.

e. Hearth

In the past, total burning of *Thingkhokhap,* single firewood and burning of all firewoods in the Kuki traditional hearth was a bad symbolism. According to their belief, total consummation of *Thingkhokhap* foretells untimely death to both head of the family, single firewood could resulted of companionless to the family couples and total burning of firewood was a bad sign causing lost of the family. If it was so, today, there will be no more Kukis on this earth as they do not maintain the above traditional rules which their forefathers followed. But we cannot call this as a superstition belief because the saying is a fable to keep the youngsters work harder in fatching of firewood and also non availability of matches to produced fire.

f. Dos and Don'ts

The Dos and Don'ts related with art and crafts in Kukis culture is a meaningful symbolic to practiced by individual for the society. Whenever the Kukis have a group work in paddy field or house construction, mentioning of the word *"Jong"* was severely prohibited. The Kuki word *"Jong"* is designate to animal monkey, thief person and sexually immoral person. When all ages of persons are working together, it was not a good discipline to say such word as anyone could take it otherwise for himself or herself. Therefore, to maintained good discipline by the individual for better society, the word *"Jong"* was not mentioned when there was any group work. Mentioning the word *"Jong"* in their group work causes or resulted nothing, but socially, this is for good moral practiced. Holding of bamboo or wood in one end and pulling instead of lifting specify laziness or insincerity on work. Therefore, the restriction of pulling a material on the ground is for better try hard or for sincere work culture.

g. House Warming

The Kuki traditional house warming is a dedication service of the house and the occupants to God both in traditional and Christianity. From the incantation, it is clear that Kukis have and belief the supreme God, Who is in above heaven. All the bad things are informed to go out of the house, and asked good health for the occupants.

h. *Symbols in Indoi*

Indoi was an installation from different resources which makes the complete symbolism to worship god for blessing. They chose good and best articles found in their surrounding for *Indoi* articles for blessing like the article. The Kukis applied different articles for representing their needs in their worship. The components used in *Indoi* are *Vohpi dehkon, Kelchal kiheh, Um, Gopi chemkol, Gopi teng, Gopi chaothen* and *Khaopi.* The incantation word says *Vohpi dehkon nasah bangin hinsa'n* which means "take care of me as you have taken care of the mother pig with the slanted forehead". By mentioning all components they prayed for blessing like the component one after one. The symbol of each components are given under

i. ***Vohpi dehkon****: Vohpi dehkon,* a mother pig with a slanted forehead symbolised a long life and fertility of women with good number of offspring.

ii. ***Kelchal kiheh:*** Kelchal kiheh is a he-goat with twisted horn which symbolised a man with long life and good offspring. It also symbolised good judgment and protector for the family.

iii. ***Um:*** *Um* is a gourd jar which is used for storing various seeds and water and symbolised the good seeds for showing and care in agricultural.

iv. ***Gopi chemkol & Gopi teng:*** *Gopi* is a name of bamboo which is used in all types of craft. C*hemkol,* a Kuki traditional knife or sword and *Teng,* a spear made from a bamboo called *Gopi* symbolised warrior and security.

v. ***Gopi chaothen:*** *Gopi chaothen* is a Kuki traditional bangle made from the bamboo Gopi which symbolized the rich music and dances of the society.

vi. ***Khaopi:*** *Khaopi* is a cord made from a fibre tree called *Khaopi* which symbolised the richness of their custom, culture and various layer of generations in their family.

vii. ***Pocha:*** *Pocha,* a traditional basket made from *Gopi* symbolized household and food management.

viii. **Supplementary components:** Each supplementary component used to decorate *Indoi* like *Ahkang-mul* (a feather of white fowl) symbolized peace and prosperity, Seboh (bundle of Se leaves), *Gopiboh* (bundle of bamboo leaves) and Thingheboh (bundle of Thinghe leaves) for hope, longer life and young generation, being of its long life and thick evergreen foliage. *Gopi-tul,* a spike taken out from the smooth and full-length of Gopi also symbolized long life.

8.5.2. Symbols in Sculptures & Monuments

The different dialects of the Kukis called stone as *Lung* or *Song*. There are several places named after the term *Lung* or *Song* which symbolised the good soil of their settlement.

The Kuki traditional memorial slab called *Lhansong* in the primal stage symbolized remembrance to the departed family member. The second stage with carved image of man, women and children signifies number of family members or the heads of enemy he killed, the animal he killed in his life time and materials like gongs, beads, guns are the valuable treasures he acquired. Therefore, the second stage of memorial slabs not only served the purpose of remembrance but also communicate the status of the departed person to others. Engraving of scripts in memorial slabs stages symbolized modern education, communication, symbols to represent their status. The latest stage also supplies the same symbolism like others in three dimensional sculptures form. The symbolism of Kuki traditional memorial slab in short is for communication and expose of their social status, and not fully base on religion.

Commemoration pillar erected on celebration of success called *Molsong* like *Chon-khom, Sa-ai* and *Chang-ai* symbolized the socio-cultural value of the festival. The image of killed animal of the fest symbolized the status and ability of the host. In the contemporary Kuki sculptures, their main emphasis became socio-politics and religious

monumental piece and symbolized their awareness and consciousness of socio-political and religious.

8.5.3. Symbols in Crafts

The story of "The Dog and The Goat" in *Sum*, the Kuki traditional mortar symbolized greediness or insatiable character. The boy test his girlfriend by placing egg on the mortar played symbolized the Kukis are intricate in selection the girl for their wife. About the broken *Khelhei*, a wooden spoon for scooping rice symbolized a lazy man who could not even make good wooden spoon should fast to discipline himself. The knowledge of traditional weaving was the primary needs of the women and symbolized the women and her position in the society. Their learning process and technique symbolized the traditional education system of the Kukis also give importance to women without gender biasness.

The different cloth designs of *Kukis* are manufactured by copying the beautiful shades and colours of snakes, animals, birds, landscapes, flowers, stars, atmosphere, agricultural products etc. It symbolized the Kukis love nature for their surrounding, advancement in creativity and skill in weaving of clothes. In Kuki culture, the invention and introduction of musical instrument, the different types of music they have, and a good number of songs and dances they produced symbolized they were music loving people. Among the Kuki traditional musical instruments *Gong* and *Goshem* are the most typical which symbolized core of their material culture.

The Kuki traditional necklace is called *"Khi"* is not only for an ornament, it is also use as *Numei man, Longman, Upa-naopa kilutna, Unu lutna* and *Nule pa lutna*. Therefore, the application of necklace in Kuki society symbolized wealth, core cultural material and most valuable fashion piece. The practiced of headdress before Christianity symbolized their social and economical status and after Christianity headdress symbolized tenderness, dutiful, submissiveness of women for Christ to her man. The Kuki hair dress symbolized beauty, health and holiness of the person.

The Kuki traditional war equipments like spear, sword, bow & arrow, cannon, gun, shield and symbol of emergency *Thingkho & Malcha* have generic symbolism of bravery, warrior, hunter and freedom fighter. The combination of *"Thingkho-le-*

Malcha" (firewood and king chilli) is very typical and symbolised their unity to fight every war by every Kuki village.

8.6. SHARING AND BORROWING OF ART AND CRAFTS

Everything in this world can be change, and no one's culture is static. Even the most conservative society's cultures also have changes. We can also say that as the era change the more development comes, the development taken place to the society makes changes in human culture. Sharing and borrowing took place for the development of individual or society. Development takes place when we learned new things from schools, we shared experiences at the workplaces, exchanged our daily life among the community and neighbours and the released from the media. Therefore, taking advantages for the development of culture, an individual or a society share or borrowed a best and most progressive culture from them or other.

8.6.1. Natural

Depending upon the physical environment and availability of materials, changes and advancements are rising naturally in Kuki culture. Sharing and borrowing of culture by nature is the most natural changes. Unknowingly, the Kukis culture changes naturally by nature, economy, geography, politics, plastic artefacts, modernization civilization. Those changes are also due to sharing or borrowing of culture naturally.

8.6.2. Politics

The Kukis have a great impact of sharing and borrowing of culture in politics and its administration. The best known example is the administration of British Colonial in the entire North East India for more than a century. They administered over the region with their western culture and ideology. Above and beyond administration, acts and provisions like *"The Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act, 1956"*, *"Article 244(1), Fifth Schedule: Provision as to the Administration and Control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes"* also became the key of sharing and borrowing culture. For example, the Kukis are governed by their hereditary chief, whereas the Nagas are administrated by elected village authority, under *The Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act, 1956*, as the Act was made common for all, the traditions become

same. Thus, Colonization of the British and Indian government administration had a great impact on *Sharing* and *Borrowing* of traditional culture of the Kukis.

8.6.3. Topography

There is a saying "geographical boundary of two states or nation is a connector, not a separator". The boundary which is just to demarcate the land with unseen line served as a connector in business and humanity relationship. The geographical or political boundary rather served as factor of Sharing and borrowing in culture. The impact of neighbouring countries which surround the larger part of North East India and the 'Chicken's Neck' or Siliguri Corridor connects the region with other parts of India culturally shows the example of sharing and borrowing of culture in topography. The Manipur *Kukis-Meiteis-Nagas* have some sharing and borrowing of art and craft than Kukis of Assam because of the topography. The Kukis of southern Manipur, border with Myanmar have some sharing and borrowing culture with the Myanmars because of the topography not the boundary line.

8.6.4. Modernization

The exposed developments change the living standard of the world and become modernization. Therefore, sharing and borrowing of art and crafts takes place in Kuki culture due to modernization of their living standard. Their traditional practises become out dated like in house, craft, art, education, religion and every day culture which are all now replaced by the new and developed ones (details discussed under).

8.6.5. Sharing and Borrowing in House

The most sharing and borrowing in house is the material used by different ethnic groups. The Kukis decorate the front wall of their house with images of bird, animal heads, skulls and horns and the Nagas use carved images of diverse animals and men shows the sharing or borrowing of trophy concept. Fencing for protection concept is practised by every ethnic groups of Manipur. The roof of the house with thatches and modern sheets used by the Kukis also same with others of Manipur. The Kuki house warming ceremony before and after the coming of Christianity is also followed by different other Christian believers.

8.6.6. Sharing and Borrowing in Sculptures and Monuments

There is sharing or borrowing of stone sculpture and monument for memorial, celebration and commemoration practiced by various ethnic groups in Manipur. The erection of memorial stone sculptures or monuments to commemorate their near and dear ones or popular persons is practiced by three ethnic groups of Manipur. The Kukis erected the memorial stone for every departed family member and their great leaders from *Khul* theory. The Meiteis and the Nagas construct the memorial stone to commemorate for those who sacrifice their life for the society or land. It can be said that, the Meiteis and Nagas borrowed from the Kukis. Border pillar is one of the most common practices to demarcate land by different ethnic groups.

The art and craft of the Nagas and the Kukis are mostly in wooden material. *Totem* is practiced by different tribal of North East India in their respective traditional ways. All the totems and images are made according to their belief and ritual. Monuments, for remembering historic events, persons and ritual ceremonies in stone, wood, fiber and cement is practiced by different ethnic groups of Manipur. The design, pattern, symbols and concepts may be different from each ethnic group, but the ideological purpose for the monument is the same. It will be difficult to find out who first started wood and stone monuments in their region, but it can be said that the practice is through sharing and borrowing of culture as it is good to practice.

8.6.7. Sharing and Borrowing in Craft

The Kukis have various sharing and borrowing in cane and bamboo craft as being the most practiced and common material in North East India. In material, instrument, technique and product, a basket called Thul or Liel by Kukis is the most common. The Meiteis called it *Phingailuk* and *Tabu* by Tangkhuls. The traditional basket used for measuring food grains locally known Sangpai (30 Kg), Laitang (20 Kg) and Likhai (10 Kg) approximately is used by all ethnic groups of Manipur. The same measurement quantity or capacity is the sharing and borrowing of the craft. The bamboo tube used for storing water, smaller bamboo tube used for storing fermented food stuff, dry chili, salt etc., and utensils made from bamboo like spoon, bawl and bamboo rode are also sharing and borrowing within them.

The Kukis have sharing and borrowing of wood craft like mortar, furniture, drum and utensil with other ethnic groups in Manipur. The wooden mortar flat and elongated

having more than one dent is used by the Kukis and Nagas. The rounded mortar having only one dent is mostly used by the Meitei or valley people. Traditional furniture made from wooden plank, log and rods was the old practice of the Kukis and the Nagas. Musical instruments like drum made from round timber log is very common to them thought they have different shapes and sizes. Not very common but a very old practice of wooden craft was utensils and tub used in kitchen by the Kukis and the Nagas.

In Manipur loin loom and throw fly shuttle loom are used both in the valley and hill for weaving. The tools, methods, techniques, designs and patterns are all sharing and borrowing directly or indirectly among them. In the first stage, each ethnic group have their own traditional way of weaving, but it was rapidly communiqué and spreading. They have some similar designs and patterns on their clothes like triangle and diamond shapes or geometrical designs, patterns of flora and fauna, land and mountain are also depicted by all in their traditional cloths. The weaving implements like front bar, bamboo bar, head bar, sword, shuttle, breast bar and back strap are all similar in every ethnic groups loin loom.

A number of musical instruments like drum, solid, win and string instruments were widely used by all ethnic groups. According to their custom-culture, the forms and its purposes are different. Some of the most sharing and borrowing musical instrument were drum, string and mouth or wind instruments like trumpet and flute.

The general costumes and ornaments like necklace, headdress, hand-band, earring, hair-dress, garments and footwear are all sharing and borrowing throughout the state or with the world. The Kuki traditional necklace has different sizes of red beads in a necklace, but others used the equal size and shape of red beads in one necklace.

The Kukis produce few pots only for their household use. As good quality earthen pots used by the Kukis are not made by them, it is sure there is sharing and borrowing of earthen pots among the different ethnic groups in Manipur. In Manipur, earthen pots are produced in *Thongjao*, *Andro* and *Longpi*. The Longpi potteries of Ukhrul are popular for its unique shapes, designs, texture, and metal like appearance.

Weapons like gun, spear, bow and arrow, sword and shield are sone of the most sharing and borrowing material culture of the world. The used of all this war implements

become sharing and borrowing to every ethnic group by the process of contact between societies through warring or friendship. The Kukis traditional way of making gunpowder is similar with that of China and French. It is belief that the Kukis have borrowed from them or it is sharing unknowingly with them.

8.6.8. Sharing and Borrowing in Symbol

Various symbolic representations in construction of traditional house in which we can find sharing and borrowing are in selection of site for construction, preparation of materials, decoration properties and house warming. The practiced may be different naturally and materialistically but the representations have the same symbolic conception. Sharing and borrowing of house symbolism may be based on regional materials and climate, not based on socio-culture and ethnic traditions. The Kukis used real animal heads killed by them on the front wall of a house as a trophy, and the Nagas carved the different images like man, women, children, various animals and birds on wood. Those who practice Christianity now have almost some common symbolic representations of house decoration structure and house warming ceremony.

The symbols represented in traditional sculptures and monuments of all ethnic groups are related with traditional ritual, culture and religion. The only differences are the material, images and scripts they used which are according to their belief, ritual, custom, cultures and ethnicity base. The most sharing and borrowing traditional musical instrument is drum. Besides drum, most ethnic groups of North East India and their neighboring countries are music loving society. The sharing and borrowing symbolism in musical instrument is the musical instruments they played in their different occasions.

The sharing and borrowing symbolism of traditional costume and ornament is the cultural value of each costume and ornaments. The present day universally used costumes and ornaments are also one of the sharing and borrowing symbolic they practiced. The traditional war equipments used by all ethnic groups have generic symbolism of bravery, warrior, hunter and freedom fighter.

8.7. CONTEMPORARY KUKI ARTISTS

Prior to the 1980s, Kuki contemporary art was mostly traditional. For the Kukis, contemporary art or artist can be termed as traditional and academic art started only in 1980s. The creativity in their everyday life is their status. The contemporary Kuki artists may be different from the other contemporary artists in work, concept, medium, market and general practices. Most of them, both traditional and academic, are practising commercial art to meet their everyday needs. Only few young and innovative artists practise the modern art style like what others practise. It is a belief prevalent in the Kuki society that their concern with commercial art is due to the setback of trade system for the artist. An artist cannot depend only on a few art-loving customers in the state. Moreover, the price of art work is cheaper than that outside of the state.

From the data shown in table, it is concluded that students' enrolment in Imphal Art College mostly depends on their talent, dedication and enthusiasm in the field. The number of Kuki students who enrolled for both Bachelor of Fine Arts and Diploma of Fine Arts was 57, but only 15 (26.32%) students completed their course. The percentage of students who completed DFA was higher than BFA. The reason for non-completion of their courses may be due to financial problems or non-commitment to their courses. The data again shows that ethnic clashes and unrest, political crisis of the state have a great impact on enrolment of the Kukis. It was after 2010, that one or two tribal candidates fulfilled the educational qualification for the faculty post. But then, the saddest part is that till now, there is no tribal teaching and non-teaching employee in the college.