3. SCULPTURES AND MONUMENTS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The art of creating objects in wood, stone, clay etc. is one of the original and oldest arts which originated before the advent of colour and other techniques of art. If making of objects from wood, stone, clay etc. is called sculpture, the first sculpture will be as old as humans and the making of things for their different purposes. According to Wikipedia, the 30 CM tall Lowenmensch of the Hohlenstein Stadel area of Germany of about 30,000 BC and a small portable sculpture with a small group of female Venus Figurines such as Venus of Willendorf of prehistoric period (24,000-22,000 BC) found in central Europe may be the oldest such surviving sculpture (Wikipedia, Wikipedia.org). The history of Sculptures has a long story from Ancient Near East (3000-2800 BC), Ancient Egypt (2700-2500 BC), Ancient Greece (650-480 BC) etc. In India, the first sculpture may be the remains of Indus Valley Civilization (3300-1700 BC) of Mohanjo-daro and Harappa.

The word “monument” comes from the Latin word “monere” which means “to remind’, ‘to advise’ or ‘to warn’ (Wikipedia, wikipedia.org). The definition of monument according to dictionary is a building or structure related with important history or to remember event history or famous people. The term monumental sculpture may also be used for some unusual sizes of sculptures or structures, but it also simply means to commemorate some events or people. All the sculptures and monuments of the past are mostly related with customs, culture, rituals etc. Materials like wood and stone are mostly used in sculptures and monuments of the different ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has its own way of doing things. The techniques of carving, implements used, the concepts and its purposes may be similar to one another. Most of the tribal communities in North East India erected stones or wooden totems to commemorate historic events, departed family or community members, honorable persons in the society and even to demarcate land and important places. The front wall of the house was decorated with carved images of human, animals and birds in relief and round sculpture, the real skull or head of big animals, and also the heads and feathers of birds.

The later development of sculpture in tribal society is in modern or abstract form of art. The present style and concept of art may be very different from the art of the past. In the past people used their skill to meet their daily needs and requirements. The capacity to invent things was their creativity. The idea which they incurred was their innovation in art and all the techniques to make the materials became traditional techniques of art. The Kukis also traditionally have such various techniques of art. The various techniques like modeling, carving, casting and construction are some of the characteristic works of sculpture. Modeling is a highly flexible sculpture in which adding and subtracting is possible. In carving, the image is carved out from the original block with strictly subtracted, whereas the technique of producing replicas from an original model to be casting and construction is the work of any sculpture by varied materials to form a complete structure. Across time, there have been changes in technique, formation and conceptualization different from country to country and its people.

A number of Emperors and Religious workers of the world were inspired by sculpture. The Encyclopedia of Art (Art) articulated the motivation theory or concept of sculptures in different perspective by different people. The Roman Emperors distributed their sculptures to mark their successful reign. The Romans decorated cathedrals, abbeys and churches with statues and relief sculptures to convey the message of the Bible. Pharaohs, Kings and Emperors from Ancient Egypt, Persia, Greece and the modern world, have invested fortunes in monumental sculpture to commemorate success in battles. Modern oppressors from Stalin to Saddam Hussein have erected statues as monuments to mark their glorious rule. Mention may also be made of America's Statue of Liberty for its inspirational message having huge narrative content capable of promoting a specific message. The Encyclopedia of Art also mentioned the discovery of new materials and equipments which helped the progress of sculptures from the early tool-culture of the Paleolithic era. The above mentioned personalities and characteristics are some of the best known universally. There were also local leaders who were inspired by sculpture in the same mood of motivation everywhere. The Kukis too have such type of Chiefs or leader from the past many years back.

The Kukis are very fond of making wood sculpture in different images and styles. One of the best known examples was that of sculptures made on their way to the fields. The true Kuki men always carry their Dao or knife whenever he goes to the jungle or the jhum field or hunting. When they take rest on the way traditionally called *Ngahmun* or *Khomol*, they never simply rest, and they are always busy with their Dao or knife to make different images with the materials available. If not in wood sculpture, they are always busy in making of bamboo chips for various crafts. Beginning with these sculptures, the Kukis gradually developed the style of their art and crafts. Thus they produced various sculptures like sculptures in stone, wood, bamboo, metal and fiberglass in different sizes, styles, designs and techniques.

3.2. STONE SCULPTURES

The myths, legends, history and culture of Kukis are closely associated with the stone. The different dialects of the Kukis call the stone as *Lung* or *Song*. They believe that their ancestors came out of *Chinlung* or cave of stony hill (Loncheu). There are several village and place named after the term *Lung* or *Song*. Villages and places like *Rungkhua* (village of rocks) in Haka District of Chin state Myanmar, *Lunglei* (stone bridge), *Lungsen* (red stone), *Lungpuk* (rock cave) and *Lungper* (scatter stone) in Mizoram. In Manipur, the village names which include *Song* and *Lung* are *Songgel* (hail stone), *Songpi* (large rock), *Songlung* (rocky stone) and *Songjang (*rocky plain). *Songpijang* (large rocky plain), *Songbung* (rocky mountain) and *Songlhuh* (Rocky Mountains) are some of the Kuki village named after Song (stone). In Bangladesh, there are many Kuki villages named after *Lung* or *Kham*. These are *Lungthausih, Lungmualkawt, Lung-inkhar, Lungpeh* and *Khamtang* etc. Terms like *Songko* (rock cave), *Songkol* (rocky), *Songlei* (rocky area) are very often heard in their culture and settlements.

There are also some traditional and ritually related cultures with stone or rock in Kuki society. 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. The Kukis are also in possession of some ritual and gemstones like *Salung* (for animal), *Changlung* (for rice), *Sumlung* (for money) and *Kholung* (for village). These stones are not like ordinary stones. The stones are of different colour,

shape and size. According to their belief, these ritual gemstones can bring good omen to the family or person. Besides the above mentioned ritualistic stone sculptures, the Kukis have also some stone sculptures which are related with their folktales and legends. In some of the Kuki folktales and legends, sculptures in stone were mentioned made by Kuki warriors which can be termed as 'monumental sculpture'.

But, due to various factors, only few standing monuments and sculptures can be seen now. Lack of proper preservation, shifting of village[10] and shortage lifespan of it materials like weed are some of the most common factors. The Kukis shifted their village place to place because of their main economy that is jhum cultivation, attack from enemies and natural calamities. In search of better and more fertile place for jhum cultivation, they abandoned their village and shifted to the place where it was better. The attack from their enemies sometime made them shift their village for a safer life in another place. Various natural calamities like wind, cyclone, water and wild-fire were also one of the factors of shifting village place.

3.2.1. *Lhan-song* (Memorial Slab)

Since time immemorial, the Kukis practice erection of monumental sculptures to commemorate the departed family members. *Lhan-song* is a memorial stone erected in loving memory of well-known persons in the society or beloved family member who pass away. *Lhan* means cemetery and *song* means stone. The legend of Muyons tells that, the *Khul* or *Khur* origin people, Chin-Kukis began erection of memorial stone when they crossed the so called mythical cave (Koroung). While crossing the cave, the snake and the tiger killed many of them. The Chongthu, who is the head or leader of the masses, informed all the family heads to bring one slate stone each and kept in one place to know the number of people killed by the snake and tiger. From that, the practice of erecting stone to remember their loved and well known persons was started.

[10] The Kukis shifted their village place to place because of their main economy that is jhum cultivation, attack from enemies and natural calamities. In search of better and more fertile place for jhum cultivation, they abandoned their village and shifted to the place where it was better. The attack from their enemies sometime made them shift their village for a safer life in another place. Various natural calamities like wind, cyclone, water and wild-fire were also one of the factors of shifting village place.

In the beginning, the memorial stone did not have any carved scripts and images. From or before 1890s[11], carving of images in memorial slab was practice by the Kukis (Tuck 193). Carving of some animal heads or images on memorial stone may be the first stage of development of art in stone sculpture. During 1890s, various carved images were found in memorial slabs. About the images, Bertram S. Carey and HN Tuck states,

> "… it consists of a thick plank of hard wood and usually the head of a man is carved on the top, from which a spike protrudes. The head represents the deceased, and on the plank is carved men, women, children, animals of all sorts, gongs, beads, guns etc. These represent the Chief, his wife, and family, the enemies and animals which he has killed, and the slaves whom he has captured. The animals represent not only those which he has killed in the jungle, but also those which he has killed at feast."

By looking the carved images on the memorial slab, the viewers understand that the deceased person was a great hunter and honorable person. After carving of animal images, engraving of script or alphabets would be the second upgrading course of action. This was the most important and developing stage in Kuki art. The development process of art in Kuki society is always related with the coming of Christianity and modern education. Practice of script in art signifies that they were educated. The use of script means there were some Kukis who knew how to read and write. Therefore, it can be traced that the period was after the introduction of schools in hill areas. Engraving of script on stones has been improved gradually, and now even the sculpted portraits of the deceased person or all kinds of stone sculptures are practised. Now, the practice of representations of person's profile in human and animal images form of 1890s are replaced by inscription in alphabets or scripts.

3.2.2. Moul-song (success pillar)

The Kukis practised erection of stone in various successful celebrations. The exact period and the original tradition of this practice were not known. Erection of stones or woods on the occasion was for memory and honour. Visitors paid regards to the family

[11] This was the written information and experience of Bertram S. Carey and H.N. Tuck given in their book "The Chin Hills" commenced from the last week of October 1894 to April 1895. During their two years (1894-1895) expedition the experienced and information they collected may be later than that year. Therefore, the exact time was not known and it will be sure that what they experienced will be later by some more years.

or village who erected a number of such successful pillars. The Kukis have monumental sculptures like various Kings and Emperors from Ancient to modern world monumental sculptures to commemorate success in battle. The early types of successful sculptures are in wood and stone material without any images and scripts on it. Two such monumental sculptures of Kuki legendry warrior *Galngam* still stands in Churachandpur District. *Galngam* placed one big standing rock as his symbol of hunting near *Hengkot* Village and another stone was erected as his mark of warrior on *Kapei Range* both in Churachandpur District of Manipur (P. Haokip 95-96). This will be the oldest standing monumental sculpture of the Kukis in Manipur.

The second success pillar known will be the pillar of *Sa-ai*[12], *Chang-ai*[13] and *Chon*[14]. The material used in most of the monumental pillar of *Sa-ai, Chang-ai* and *Chon* are locally-found wood called *Sithing*[15]. The details of designs and technique of making the pillar with *Sithing* will be describe in the following paragraph under the sub-heading of Wood Sculpture. Contemporary to *Sithing* sculpture, the Kukis also continued erection of stones in various successful celebrations, but, unlike the monumental stones of *Galngam.* The successful monuments or sculptures of this phase had some carved images of animals and birds they hunted. Locally available stones having naturally flat or plain surface was selected. May be technically they did not have the knowledge to flat and smoothing the surface, so, they chose a stone naturally smooth and flat surfaced. One such monumental sculpture was found at old village site of *Chassad* king in *Thiengbung* Range of Churachandpur District, Manipur, presently occupied by his

[12] *Sa-ai* is a *Kuki* traditional festival celebrated by a successful man folk of the family who could hunt varied animals including tiger. The man who could perform this ritual was highly honored in the society. According to their belief (Shakespear. 1912:Glossary) *Ai* is a ceremony performed to propitiate the spirit of an animal killed in the chase, or a human deing killed in war. The performer's spirit will own the spirit of person or animal killed in the next world. The term is also used for a ceremony performed to celebrate a particularly good crop-*Chang-ai.*

[13] *Chang-ai* was another ritual to celebrate the success of woman folk in the family. *Chang-Ai* was performed by only a woman who was successful in her jhum cultivation.

[14] *Chon* is a Thadou-Kuki traditional festival celebrated to honour a successful person in the field of hunting and cultivation. A person (man & woman) who could perform *Sa-Ai* and *Chang-Ai* three times are able to celebrate this *Chon* festival. (Shakespear. 1912:207) states that, among the Haokip I am told that a position equivalent to Thangchhuah is attained by thrice celebrating the Ai of one of the following-tiger, bear, elephant, or hornbill.

[15] I was told by most of the elder during the interview that only *Shiting* was used for the *Selkhom*. *Shithing* is a kind of tree of an Oak family traditionally used by the Kukis for house construction and ritual totems or pillars.

(*Chassad* king) younger brother *S. Gelbung* chief. 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.

a. "The Elephant"

The Elephant monument is still in a standing position at the main and centre point of the village. It is about eight feet tall, two and half feet wide and above one foot thick. The front side facing southern ward has a standing elephant, sculpted with fine line at the centre of the monument. The front surface is naturally flat and the elephant was sculpted at the centre. The legs, tail and trunk of the elephant are in a straight line on the ground. There are no other images. Some scripts are written like *"Lalboi Kipt"* and *"Thangcha Youth Secy"* in bold letters. The scripts are believed to be written by *S. Gelbung* youths after they occupied the place in 1992. In the past the *Kukis* certainly did not use short names like *Lalboi* and *Thangcha*. Meanwhile, the short form title like *Kips, Kipt* or *Qips* etc. are coined by the youths in place of their full title *Haokip* or *Kipgen* during the 1990s.

The *Chassads* were warriors. Among the Kuki chiefs, *Chassads* were so popular because of their administration, wealth, war fighting and wide territorial country. Till today, people talk about the large number of *Chassad's* domestic animals such as elephant, mithun, cow, buffalo, goat, pig, dog and fowl etc. Among the domestic animals, elephant was the biggest. *Pu Chunglet Haokip* gives the comment that, elephant being their biggest and most useful domestic animal may be the reason why the *Chassads* sculpted elephant in the monumental sculpture.

The period to which the sculpture can be dated is not known. According to the oral tradition passed on from generation to generation and some written records, it can be calculated as 100 to 300 year old sculpture. Around late 17th Century, (C. Haokip) the *Chassads* ruled south of Manipur valley and settled at *Thiengbung* hill range[16]. The *Chassads* occupied Chin Hills of Myanmar to the southern part of Manipur valley for

[16] According to Mackenzie, in the end of 1877, the *Chassads* with their tributary off-shoots once left Manipur valley. See Mackenzie, Alexander. The North-East Frontier of India. New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1884. p. 211.

more than a century. In the end of 1877, (Mackenzie 211) the Chassads with their tributary off-shoots once left Manipur valley as the chief was murdered by a high Manipuri official, when he was invited by the then Political Agent Colonel McCullock. From the above statement, 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.

b. "The Chon"

Another monumental stone sculpture of *Chassad* was the monument of *"Chon".* According to *Chunglet*, the monument was in good condition when he visited the range in 1985. But, when they visited the place to set-up the village in 1992, the upper portion of the stone was found lying on the ground. Now the upper part is used for bathing purpose in the village. In 1992 the lower or base part was still standing in good shape. Later in 2005, the village Baptist Youth Fellowship (BYF) used the lower part for their anniversary celebration stone. The study is carried out with the help of the broken part which was already used for bathing and the memory collected from the villagers through interview.

According to *Jangkhopao,* 36 years, Village Authority Secretary (Jangkhopao), the lower part was still standing in good condition till 2005. The stone depicts some animal images like tiger, deer, wild pig and man carrying a pot. *Letkhosei Haokip* recollected and described the images inscribed which were now removed and the stone was used by the BYF for their foundation day memorial. Chief of the village (L. Haokip) states that, images of animals, pot, a man and tree like structure were seen while the monumental structure was in standing position. He regrets the fact that they did not take necessary measures to preserve the monument; instead the authority recommended the youths to use it for their foundation stone. *Pu Chunglet* also gives some comment about the images. The animals, man carrying a pot, a dancing girl with headgear, the big *mithun* and something looks like a bundle of bamboo leaves depicts that the stone was used for a traditional festival called *Chang-ai* or *Sa-ai* or *Chon* (C. Haokip). In the traditional festival of *Sa-ai*, all the killed animal heads are displayed from the smallest to the biggest. The traditional festival *Chang-ai*, being the day to honor women of the household for her success in cultivation, all women were dancing with all their best

traditional attired they had. So, it is belief that, the different images of animal depicts *Sa-ai,* and the dancing girl with headgear may be signifying *Chang-ai.* Therefore, it is termed as *The Chon* which a festival celebrated by a successful Kuki man for his great hunting called *Sa-ai* and woman for her success in jhum cultivation called *Chang-ai*.

Another broken sculpture is also found at the village. Animals like tiger, wild pig, deer and hornbill head were sculpted on it. The stone looks like broken. The images and concepts depicted on the stones and technique looks like the monument stone of *Sa-ai* festival. *Sa-ai* was a traditional festival of great hunting. The great Kuki hunters after killing all kinds of animal celebrated *Sa-ai* in which hornbill and tiger were compulsory. And a woman who was successful in her jhum cultivation performed *Chang-ai* festival. Chon festival is another traditional Kuki festival (M. A. Haokip) where the man of the family celebrated *Sa-ai* and women celebrated *Chang-ai.* Therefore, the monumental sculpture in which the images of dancing woman, man carrying pot, different kinds of animal, tree structure and bundles of bamboo leaves can be titled as *The Chon.* And another stone having animal images may be the monumental sculpture of *Sa-ai* festival.

3.2.3. *Gamgi* (Border pillar)

Traditionally, the Kukis demarcated their respective land with river, mountains and stones. River and mountain range are the best and natural boundary of the two chief's land. But where there is no river and mountain ranges, border pillar served as the boundary demarcation. Whenever there was any dispute between two chief on their land boundary issues, border pillar was erected to demarcate the border line by the committee. The committee would consist of more than two nearby chiefs, village elders and the village priest. The border pillar was erected in the presence of the committee. It was erected only after the two chief agreed with the decision of the committee. The village priest led the team and the pillar was erected at the place of boundary line. They believed that any person who knowingly broke or tempered with the border pillar got back luck in his life. Therefore, every person respected border pillars. A Border pillar is just a simple stone found in the nearby boundary. No images and scripts were inscribed on it.

3.3. WOOD SCULPTURE

Wood is the foremost and most common medium in sculpture. Wood carving may be the oldest style of sculpture. Wood sculpture lasted for a short period of time; therefore, it is difficult to say when it was started and where? From pre-historic to modern, wood sculpture was always mentioned in the history of sculpture. Wood is easily available in most parts of the world, it is also easy to carve and do not need much technique and materials.

3.3.1. Doikhom

Doikhom is a pillar or totem used for hanging *Inn-Doi*, the traditional Kuki primal house god. Every family head of the Kukis possessed *Inndoi*. *Inndoi* was very necessary for every household of the Kukis where head of family was male. *Doikhom* had a branch, just six to ten feet height. Only good and healthy *Sithing* tree was used. *Tucha* of the family would go to the jungle to prepared *Doikhom. Ngamkhothang* (N. Haokip) states that, the branch of the tree which faced east was taken for the branch of totem. *Tucha* also prepared all necessary items locally known as *Shithing boh, Thinghi boh & Go boh*, whichever were needed for decoration of *Doikhom* from jungle on the same day. The healthy *Shi* tree which has a branch facing east was then cut down and carved for the totem. Generally, the *Doikhom* totem is six to ten feet height, with a branch for hanging the *Inn-Doi*.

One interesting argument is that, if every Kuki household had *Tucha* or every married man was *Tucha* in his mother's family, then it meat that every married man was *Tucha.* Further, if the preparation of *Doikhom* was the duty of Tucha, it meat most of the heads of household in the village had prepared *Doikhom*. Therefore, every man was a craftsman or artist who could at least carve and encompass the knowledge of art and craft.

Doikhom was posted somewhere in front of the house yard with various materials for decoration with specific symbolism. While performing the ritual, the priest mentioned all the material used in his chanting words.

Hee! Pathennu! Pathenpa!

Shinun pha nasah bang nisa'n lang,
Shibah kajampha nasah bangin ni sa'n.
Bomgui/khaopi lamkoo bangin kahinkho saosah in;
Thinghi nunpha nasah bangin nisa'n;
Gopi changnam nasah bangin nisa'n;
Muchi umpha nasah bangin nisa'n;
Chaotin nasah bangin nisa'n;
Chemjam nasah bangin nisa'n.

Free translation

Oh! My God! My Father!
Bless me like a healthy *Shithing* tree,
Bless me like the finest braches of *Shi* tree;
Lengthen my life like a jungle Rope-a length of *lamkoo*[17]*;*
Bless me like a healthy *Thinghi*[18] tree;
Bless me like a smooth and healthy *Bamboo;*
Bless me like a healthy bitter Gourd;
Bless me like glittering Bangles;
Bless me like a mighty Sword.

And then the priest would spit the wine from his mouth upward. According to their belief, the wine that they used was given by the God.

On the day of *Saneng-het* which was a house warming day, *Inn-Doi* which was kept outside during the construction of a house was kept back at its place. According to *Pu Ngamkhothang,* the priest would chanting the house warming words saying (N. Haokip)

Khomgol phutohmo lung nalhai jin;
Chosah lung nalhai jin;
Cholhang lung nalhai je;
Sutpi lung nalhai jin;
Hegol lung nalhai jin;
Bigol lung nalhai jin;
Khupi lung nalhai jin;
Khupha lung nalhai jin;

[17] "*Lam"* is a kind of Thadou-Kuki traditional measurement of length by wide opening of both arm; "*Koo"* means a numerical value of nine (9).

[18] *Thinghi* is a kind of a tree used for decorating the house-god totem. *Thinghi* tree resembles a *Shi* tree which is traditionally used for totem, pillars, and many more.

Lhochongnu lung nalhai jin;
Lhochongpa lung nalhai jin;
Lhoutin nu lung nalhai jin;
Lhoutin pa lung nalhai jin;
Pathen nu lung nalhai jin,
Pathen pa lung nalhai jin.

Free translation

Still the House Pillars are pleased;
Upland-side wall of the house is pleased;
Downland-side wall of the house is pleased;
Main Pillar is pleased;
Small-cut bamboo for the roof is pleased;
Thatched-Grass is pleased;
Thick thatched is pleased;
Good thatched is pleased;
The great House-Wife is pleased;
The great Head-Man is pleased;
Women, whosoever comes in are pleased;
Men, whosoever comes in are pleased;
Mother Goddess is contented pleased,
God the Father is contented please.

By using *Inn-Doi*, the Kukis did not worship *Thillhas* (temporary gods). They believed that there were various gods and evils which could cause good or bad happenings to humans, but above all they also believed that there was one God who is responsible for all that was on earth and human life. In this regard, we can take the story of the *Chassad-Thiengbung* relationship told by the interviewee *Pu Chunglet*. *Chassad* village is the origin of *Haokips*, and the chief is the eldest. *Thiengbung* is the name of a high mountain in the south of Manipur (C. Haokip).

> Once, the *Chassads* settled their village in *Thiengbung* mountain range, the village was well established. The *Chassads* and the *Thillha* (gods) of *Thiengbung* were good friends in all respects. The *Thiengbung* gods told the *Chassads* that, "God has given us the power and responsibility to control everything in this earth, but, the life of human being and all in this earth are under His control. So, if you stay with us your family/village will be in a wealthy position. Your crops, your hunting jungle even your health will be all well." Therefore, as long as the *Chassads* settled their village at the range, they were strong, wealthy and good in all aspects.

3.3.2. Thi-kong

Thi-kong is traditional Kuki coffin, where a dead person was kept for buried. It is a combination of two words *"thi"* means death and *"kong"* means box. In olden days, the Kuki traditional coffin was made of a single large tree. A large tree which was good and easy to carve was selected from the nearby jungle. Making of coffin was the duty of the deceased family's *Tucha* with the help of some village craftsmen and strong youths for carrying. The deceased family's *Tucha* would arrange the necessary equipments like axe, dao, chisel, mallet and carving tool locally named *Heikhup*.

Large timber trees which were easy to carve and light in weight were selected. The desired size which could contain the dead body was carved out from the timber (Singson). The head portion of the coffin was bigger in size. The size of the coffin depended on the size of the dead body. It measured five to eight feet in length, more than two feet in breadth and one and half feet in depth. To cover the coffin, a wooden plank cut out from the same timber was cut to the size of the coffin (Mizoram State Museum).

The above mentioned techniques were practised by the Kukis since before the coming of Christianity. The whole process, technique and energy they spent were huge. This might be due to their lack of experience in getting thinner and better wooden plank from a large timber and non-availability of saw for cutting woods. Gradually, the developments in technical implements change their way of making things. The one or two coffin or wooden plank made from only one large timber was vanished after getting the knowledge of making a number of wooden planks from one timber.

3.3.3. Contemporary Sculptures

The contemporary sculptures of the Kukis include traditional and academic style. The traditional styles are the sculptures which 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 et cetera. Traditional sculptures like sculpted animal heads and horns for house decorations has the same concept of what the Kukis used to decorated their traditional house of the front wall with killed animal heads and skulls. 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.

The modern sculptures or Academic style of sculptures are the sculptures which are made with modern equipments and materials and followed certain academicals procedure. Sculptures or monuments like Statue of well known personals in their society, abstract form of sculptures, used of latest and modern chemicals and various forms of castings are their contemporary academic style of sculpture. Fibre casting sculptures is one of the examples of contemporary academic style sculpture. As they have the knowledge and skill of working in fibre, they now produced number of sculptures and monuments by the used of fiberglass. Sculptures in fiberglass are seen only in some works of academically trained artist like *Mangcha Neishiel* and *Ngamkholen Haokip.* 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. *Ngamkholen Haokip* has also worked on fiberglass in abstract forms all related with Kuki traditional themes.

3.3.4. Inn-thing

Inn-thing is a wood material used for house constructions. According to the structure of the house and availability of materials, the wooden materials used were different. But, the Kukis always chose the best available wood for the purpose. Some of the best woods for construction of a house were *Si-thing, Gel-thing, Lai-thing, Thing-hi, Vong-thing* and *Gangpi-thing.* All these woods were hard and therefore, best for house pillar. Among the Kukis, there is a saying "*Thing umlou na'a go kimang"* which means "bamboo is used where there is no wood". From the above saying it can be said that, the Kukis used bamboo where there was no wood for construction of a house. Therefore, wood was the primary item used in the construction of a house. Wood is used in various house structural aspects like pillar, beam and floor of house construction.

To acquire the desired shape and size for use, they applied different process. A large and old tree which had solid substances was selected for pillars. The rounded log was

hewn from the outer layer till the solid part of the tree. By using Axe or Dao, it was made in rounded or flat-surfaced. Any wooden structure used in house pillar was made rounded or flat-surfaced. The rounded pillars always had elongated cut and hewn marks on it. The flat-surfaced pillars or beams had less marks of elongated, hewn with cut marks. The wooden planks were also hewn out of a solid and healthy tree (L. Haokip). Firstly, the log was divided into two equal parts. The planks were made out of the two divided parts of the log. This meant that only two planks were produced from that large log. Traditionally, the Kukis mostly preferred *Sithing* for different posts or pillars of a house.

Why *Sithing* was important and popular among the Kukis for different purposes? How and for what the tree was used? These questions are the rationale theme in every discussions and interviews during the research. The most common response is characteristically, *Sithing* is a hard, healthy, solid wood and worms cannot damage. *Sithing* cannot be harmed by insects like termite and gnat (N. Haokip); it can be damaged only by a yearlong exposed to heat and rain in open spaces. Besides its natural characteristics, *Sithing* has it symbolism with the traditional ritual importance in the Kuki society. The oral history of *Sithing* was first taking place with the origin of *Inndoi* in Kuki myths. According to the different version of myths, *Inndoi* was first taken from the branch of *Sithing.*[19] It is used as house pillar, monumental and ritual posts by hewing accordance to the essentials. It also served as the most important part in house construction and in religious occurrences. The Kukis always built their villages where *Sithing* was found because of its ritual significances and characteristics (Yamkhopao), which are mostly in hilly region. Therefore, *Sithing* was important and once the most popular tree or wood among the Kukis.

3.4. METAL SCULPTURE

The Kukis practised metal sculpture from the olden days. Black-smithy might have been first metal work. Every village had a blacksmith, who made various metal instruments for the entire village. He held a high status in the village. He was exempted from paying tax; instead every household in the village gave him one day wage as a fee

[19] The different versions of Inndoi origin will be discuss in detail at Chapter five.

in a year. Instruments like Axe, Knife, Spades, Arrow, Dao, Spears and any metal implements were made. Besides the making of implements, melting of brass and telegraph wire is universally practised, and armlets and bangles are made by pouring the molten metal into moulds made of a mixture of paddy-husks and clay (Tuck 214).

3.5. FIBERGLASS SCULPTURE

Fiberglass casting, being a mixture of chemical substances, is a purely industrial material. It is made from small and thin strands of glass. It has replaced asbestos worldwide in many applications. According to the International Agency on Cancer Research (IACR) and United States of America Environmental Protection Agency, fiberglass emits a synthetic material called styrene, which is a possible carcinogenic. At high levels, styrene can cause tiredness, concentration and balance problems, and irritation of the eyes, nose and throat (Registry). Inhaling of fibers can reduce lung function and cause inflammation in animals and humans. Carmelo Abbate, et al., states that (Carmelo Abbate 1725-1729),

> "… independent of other environmental hazards and respiratory problems, fiberglass altered components of the lungs in men working in glass fiber-reinforced plastic processing. Fiberglass can cause skin, eye and throat irritation. At higher exposure levels, fiberglass also has been associated with skin rashes and difficulty in breathing."

Besides the development prospects and effects of fiberglass, most of the Manipur artists do not favoured fiberglass in their sculptures. The chemical substances like resin, hardener and fiber mat are not found easily in the market. Users can only order their needs from Kolkata or Guwahati. Only few artists order the materials needed for their casting in unavoidable circumstances. Sculptures in fiberglass are seen only in some works of academically trained artist like *Mangcha Neishiel* and *Ngamkholen Haokip. Mangcha Neishiel* one of the first academically trained Kuki artists and also one of the most famous among the Kuki artists has used fiberglass in many of his monumental sculptures. Some of his 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. Till this research was carried out, *Ngamkholen Haokip* has worked on fiberglass only during his Masters Degree course at Delhi. His fiberglass sculptures are

all related with Kuki traditional themes. Therefore, *Mangcha Neishel* and *Ngamkholen Haokip* may be the only Kuki artists in Manipur who have understanding of fiberglass casting and working on it.

3.6. INSTALLATION ART OR SCULPTURES

There were also traditional sculptures which are not included in the above areas in respect of material, concept and technique. In the history of art the so called artistic experimentation "installation art" was publicized during 1970s (Harvey). The Kukis started installation of art since time immemorial. The most known traditional Kuki installation art was *Inndoi. Inndoi* has more than twelve components of different materials with different meanings or symbolism in the Kuki religious perspective. The components are (Chongloi 188), slanted mother pig skull, curved horn of he-goat, jar made of gourd, Dao, spear and bangle made of *Gopi*, cord made from *Khaopi* plant, feathers of white fowl, *Shi* tree, wild creeper, *Thinghe* tree, small basket made from *Gopi* and spike made from *Gopi*. All the above components are installed together and hung on the front porch of the house.

Another installation art was the totems of different item used in their ritual services. At the time of *Hun-ahkangtha*, which was performed every beginning of the year. All household of the village performed the ritual ceremony for their blessing throughout the year. The various totem items include a young and healthy *Shi* tree about six feet with a branch, *Shi* tree branch with thick foliage, branch of *Gopi* leaves and decorated with feathers of spotless white cock (Chongloi 200-203). The installations of totems are different with their ritual performance. The totems of *Chon* and *Sa-ai* are different from that of *Hun-ahkangtha* ceremony. In the ritual ceremony of *Chon* and *Sa-ai,* the installation items are *Shi* tree 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*[20]. The installation items are made according to the animal sacrifices. Most of

[20] This is a ritual ceremony to cure the sick person. *Kithoi* means to make good or cured.

the items are made from clay (Lamkhotin). If the ritual was performed by sacrificing pig, there is a sculpture of pig, sculpted mithun for mithun, cow for cow and fowl for fowls etc. The other items include sculpted image of man or woman in clay, flags made from different colours of thread. All the materials used in *Kithoi* ritual are 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). They are not worshiping the evils, but make peace with them not to harm them. This could be proved by the words saying while chanting during the ritual. Interim

3.7. MONUMENTS

Monumental structures are for remembering historic events, persons and ritual ceremonies. The unusual sizes of sculptures or structures are also term as monumental sculpture. The Kuki traditional monuments are various stone monuments, pillar, wooden plank for house floor, pillar or post of various ritual ceremonies and celebrations. The mostly commonly used material in their different monumental structures was wood. Only few stone monuments can be seen today. The stone monuments which were presently in a good condition are the monuments built after the coming Christianity. The monuments of the past are crumbling due to naturally occurred prolonged head and rain, less cared, destructions of one's material culture in the name of ethnicity.

The statuses which are in good form are the monuments made after Naga-Kuki ethnic clashes of 1990s. Some wood monuments vanished due to the long exposed in open space, and some disappeared due to the burning of village and houses during the ethnic clashes. The historical development of traditional Kuki monuments can be said that, it goes down after the coming of Christianity, and rapid growth can be observed again after the ethnic clashes. It can be said that, the coming of Christianity period and the 1990s ethnic clashes are two major important evolution period in their cultural traits.

There were a number of monuments which are made by the Kukis themselves or by others to commemorate them. Most of the monuments to remember their dear ones or socio-cultural events are made of a local tree called *Shithing.* The monuments made from wood are mostly of socio-cultural or religious pillars and totems. Most of the

Kuki festivals are performed by killing of big animals like mithun, buffalo, cow or pig and erection of monument in wood or stone to commemorate the event. The monument made from *Shithing* 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. Such monumental pillars made from wood are varied type of Selkhom.

3.8. SELKHOM[21]

Selkhom is another totem or monumental post of the Kukis. A tree called *Sithing* was used in *Selkhom. Sel* means mithun and *Khom* is the pillar or totem. In the traditional Kuki celebrations like *Sa-ai, Chon, Lom-selneh* and *Kut* mithun was killed. The mithun was tied with a rope to a post before it was killed. It was killed with some ritual, game and song (M. A. Haokip). The pillar was decorated with tree and bamboo leaves, birds' feathers, carved texture, images of animal and scripts according to the festival which they celebrated (Singson). To carve and decorate the pillar, skilled craftsman of the village were engaged (Yamkhopao). Different festivals had different forms of pillar in texture, size, design and materials.

3.8.1. Chon Selkhom

Like the preparation of *Doikhom,* in the celebration of Chon festival, the *Tucha* of the family (who performed Chon) was engaged in making of post. The best *Si* tree, having three branches in the same place and one facing eastwards was selected. It was first hewed by the use of Axe or Dao. After the desired shape and structure was acquired, the texture designs were carved. The skulls of mithun killed were placed on the post, (Shakespear) it is the highest ambition of the Kukis to have a long line of such posts in front of their house. Shakespear also gives that,

> "Each post is cut out of a tree of considerable size, which is dressed until the lower 7 or 8 feet are only some 8 or 9 inches thick. Above this the tree is roughly cut into a plank some 8 or 9 inches thick, forming an irregular quadrilateral, the lower side being a foot or so long and the upper from 2 to 3 feet, while one side many be 18 inches and the other 2 feet or a little more; at each of the upper corners there is a

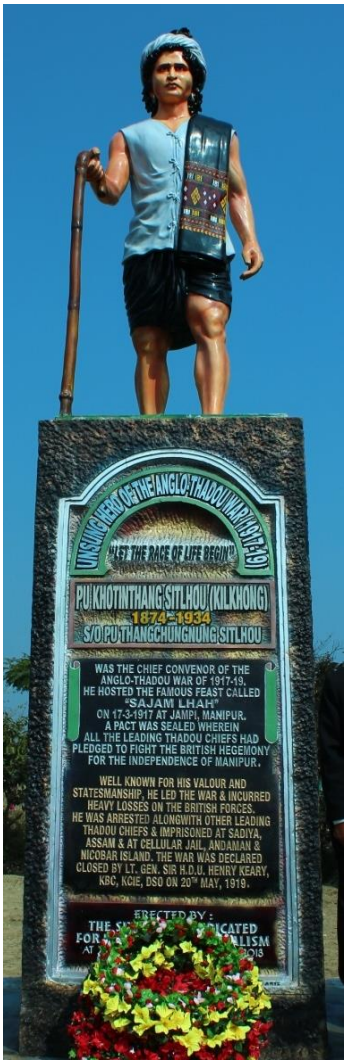
[21] The traditional Kuki way of celebrating any feast was with killing of Mithun. Before killing, the mithun was tied with a decorated monumental post to commemorate the festival. Mithun was killed for the feast so the monument post is called *Selkhom.*

> perpendicular projection some 12 inches long terminating in a spike… Posts are erected on similar occasions by many of the Kuki-Lushai clans."

The size of the post differed from place to place, according to the materials available. The post of *Chon-khom* or *Chon Selkhom* was traditionally around 7 to 9 feet in height above the ground. The mature and good condition *Si* tree was commonly used. There is a saying that, (L. Haokip) the Kukis always settled in the hilly reason where plenty of *Si* tree was found, which was popularly used for their household materials and totems. Traditionally they used *Si* tree because of its good branches and leaves and especially for its long life. But the question arises that there is a tree which has a longer life than *Si* tree, having three branches-one stretching towards the east, can it be used? Yes, it can be used for the post. Ritually, traditionally, culturally or customarily it was not mandatory to use only *Si* tree for this type of post. One such example was the post of *Pu Tongkhojang Haokip, Sa-ai* (*Chonkhom*) (Craftsman) 18-1-1976 at *Phaikoh* Village of Ukhrul District, Manipur and *Pi Phalam, Chang-ai*, for her successful crop harvest of 1000 baskets rice at *Phaikoh* Village, Ukhrul District of Manipur on 18-3-1971. Both the posts are of Teak tree. The posts contemporary to these two in a *Si* tree are no longer existed. But the posts made in Teak tree are still standing in good condition. However, the carved textures and designs can no more be seen.

3.8.2. Lom Selkhom

Lom Selkhom is the Kuki traditional celebratory monumental post of *Lom Selneh*, a big feast of the village labour corp. The celebration is held once in a year for the entire village, after the seed sowing season. *Lom* is a labour corp. working together to uphold the economy of the family in particular and the village in general (Singson). After completion of seed sowing, the *Lom* leaders fixed a day for the feast. The youths of the *Lom* contributed one day to prepare *Selkhom* with the help of some senior craftsman in the village. A good and healthy *Shi* tree, straight and having a number of branches was selected for the post. After the desirable size was cut out, textures and designs like line in crossing, circle the wooden post with cut-mark texture. A bundle of topmost leaves were used for decoration. Therefore, visitors can easily differentiate the *Lom Selkhom* from *Chon Selkhom*. The monumental post of *Chon Selkhom* is about 7 to 9 feet in height, while that of *Lom Selkhom* depends on the height of the tree.



Visual 3. 1: Statue of Pu Khotinthang Sitlhou (Fiberglass & Stone)

Visual 3. 2: Lom Selkhom (G. Gelbung Village)

Visual 3. 3: Traditional Coffin (Mizoram State Museum)

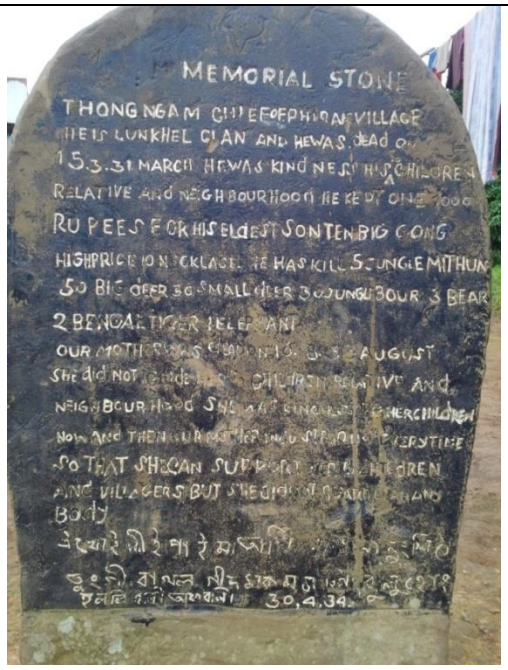
Visual 3. 4: *Chon-khom: Sa-ai* and *Chang-ai* in Teak

Visual 3. 5: Nampi Kipumkhat na Maicham (Mix-media) By Mangcha Neishel

Visual 3. 6: Statue of Pu Tintong Haokip (Mix-media) by Mangcha Neishel

Visual 3. 7: Stone Engraving Sculptures found in G. Gelbung by Chassads

Visual 3. 8: Pumjap (traditional air blower), Tribal Research Institute Museum, Imphal

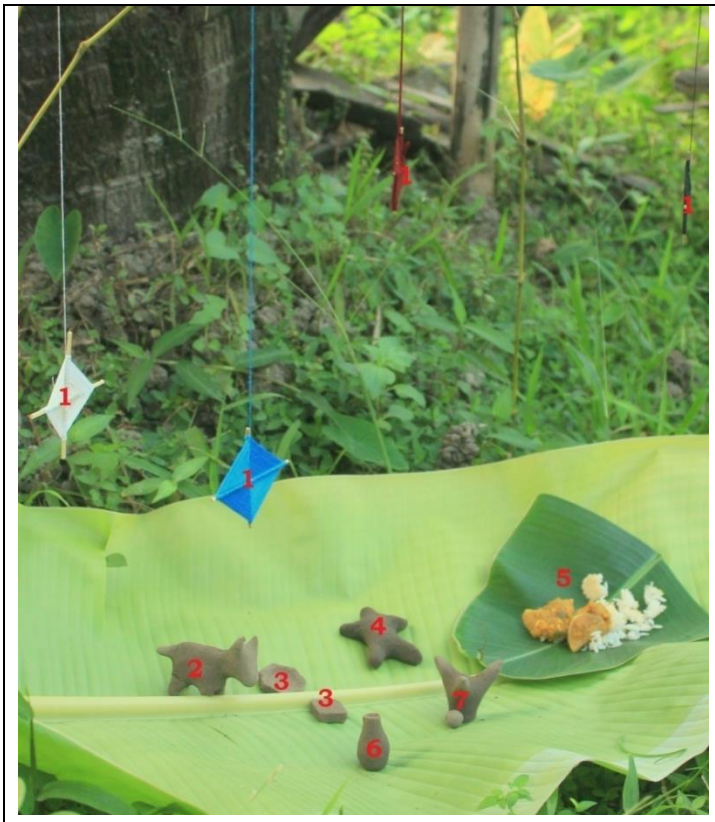


Visual 3. 9: Memorial Stone (one of the first stage of introducing inscription of English)

Visual 3. 10: Memorial Stone with introduction of colour and personal appreciation for the society

Visual 3. 11: "Honour", a bronze sculpture by Ngamkholen Haokip

Visual 3. 12: "Traditional Tune", Bronze, by Ngamkholen Haokip (Awarded MSKA Art Award-2011)



1. Phelep (Decoration)
2. Sel (Mithun)
3. Sum (Money-coin)
4. Mi (Man)
5. Bu le me (Rice and curry)
6. Jubel (Rice beer pot)
7. Sikhom (Wooden post)

Visual 3. 13: *Kithoina*, Installation in Kuki traditional ritual called *Kithoi*

Visual 3. 14, & 15: *Kithoina*, Installation of Art.