4. KUKI TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Wood and bamboos were not useable before human skills were carried out. Daily needs like furniture, baskets, household equipments and decoration items, and various materials are made fit for used by a lot of skills. Craft is a process to produce something useful by applying skills in the materials which are not used in the primal stage. The term craft also applies to the materials which are produced by hand skills. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (Inc., 2014) states that, "the traditional terms craftsman and craftswoman are nowadays often replaced by artisan". If the term artisan was initially termed as craftsperson (craftsman or craftswoman) then the first craft can be termed as the first art in form and nature.

The primitive people first started craft, which later became art. The development of craft starts from the very early period to the present times passing through various stages. The first and most important development in human civilization may be that of discovery of tools and materials for their use. The first tools of stone-age, iron-age and computer-age etcetera all have its own developmental pace. The tools are the first craft, and the products out of those tools are the second craft products. Looking back at the history of human civilization, the ancient history of Stone Age, human beings first used tools made of stone. This may be the first known craft-making of tools. One assumption question can be made in this regard that, what is the Age or Era before Stone Age? If the Stone Age was named after the stone tools, there might have been another Age like Nail Age[22] or Wooden Age[23], which were unable to be excavated due to its non-sturdy in nature. Therefore, the research has its own limitation and hypothesis based on introduction of craft from the ancient to the present status of traditional Kuki crafts.

[22] By the term Stone Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age and so on, naturally, the named comes not because of the characteristic but because of the usefulness application. Most animals used their nails as basic tool. The application of nails by human beings has a primary importance in their everyday life.

[23] This is my hypothesis that, like the Nail Age, Wooden Age also may exist as it is more easily available and softer than stone. The problem is, there was no sign of woods in excavation artefacts. Else, there would be also Wooden Age.

In this chapter, self-made theoretical framework is being used for every sub-chapter. History, technics, concepts and various perspective theoretical frameworks is commonly used for the sub-chapters i.e. Cane & Bamboo, Wood, Weaving, Metal and Musical Instruments.

4.2. CANE AND BAMBOO

4.2.1. History

As the Kukis have no written records of their past, it is difficult to mention the origin and period of cane and bamboo crafts in their society. Based on the oral tradition of their history, interview and the records found, the Kukis used cane and bamboo craft from since time immemorial. The Kuki traditional cane and bamboo craft can be divided into three different development stages, i.e. Early stage, Developing stage and Contemporary stage. The early stage of traditional Kuki cane and bamboo craft will be its inventions. The generic term of baskets for different purpose is *"Thiem". Thiemsah* is the art of cane and bamboo craft.

Cane and bamboo craft was once highly practised among the Kukis. There was a time when every Kuki male from adolesent age knows how to make the most simple carrying basket called *"Kongvong"*. The adolescents who are capable to make various crafts are highly appreciated in the society and rated high for probale their husband by girls. There was a saying *"Kongvong cha kam theilou pasal".* The meaning of the phrase is that a man who cannot make kongvong is illiterate, and unprivileged for marrying a good girl. The Kuki traditional education for boys was stated by Lenthang (Lenthang 67) as

> Masanglai in pasal chapang ho chun ahung kikhanlhit masang, lung gelthei ahung hiuva pat chun, themzilna ding khutthiem, thiemthil bol, themsah kithem chuhna ahin nei masa pen jiu vin ahi. Hiti chun go phung ningkum peng ho chu asat un, nang in alemdoh un, amet nem un hiche akon chun aban banin Kongvong, Longkai, Liel, Sinkhup, Doup, Godal, Seng, Thul, Nampeh, Paipeh, Kong-vo chuleh jat chom-chom tamtah ahin sadoh thei un ahung themdoh ji taovin ahi. Ahungthep doh phat teng ule, gopum ningkum peng ho leh tingpi, taiting kiti ho a kon chun innsunga kimanchah nading thil hoitah tah in ahinbol doh ji taovin ahi. Paocham tun in "Pasal them sathei lou chu iti inncheng thei ding ham?" ti'n mipa ahunghi tengleh mipi seiset leh nuisat ana chang in ahi. Chuleh numei ho chun asei jiuvin "Them sathei lou Bengkong beh sathei lou toh iti kicheng khomthei ding ham?" tin ana deimo lheh jengun ahi. Hitia hung kithem chuh a ana cheng ho

> chu Kuki-Chin-Mizo chuleh Limbu, Tamang kitiho jouse chu ahiuvin, innsung konkhat ahiuvin ahi.

Free translation

> In the past, a boy right from adolescent age first practised and learned art and craft. They cut the bamboo preferably one year old, split into pieces and made the traditional carrying baskets like *Kongvong, Longkai, Liel, Sinkhup, Doup, Godal, Seng, Thul, Nampeh, Kongvo* etc. and became proficient in making of all crafts. After learning all these, they could make all the necessary cane and bamboo craft for the household by the use of bamboo and different types of cane. A popular quote says "How a man without the knowledge of bamboo craft will survive?" People will laugh at him when he gets married. And the girls said "it is unacceptable to marry a man who cannot even make *Bengkong*". This practice was followed by Kuki-Chin-Mizo, Limbu and Tamangs.

Not only in making of various cane and bamboo crafts, in this stage, the Kukis were also developing in its uses. The house they lived in, the tools and materials they used in their everyday life were all the product of cane and bamboo. Both the materials were found in the jungle, which was owned by them. There were different types of cane and bamboo found according to the region and climate. Each type has its value for different craft objects. Some of their important cane and bamboo crafts are *Tieng Touna, Lelpi/Thul, Go-dal, Doup, Pai-Peh, Sengke, Kongvang, Nam-kol* etcerera.

4.2.2. Cane (Tieng)

There are three types of cane which the Kukis use for their different craft items. They are: *Tieng-san* (red), *Tieng-pi* (bold) and *Jang-tiengngat* (which is found in plain area). *Tieng-san* is a cane red in colour found in hill areas. *Jang-tiengngat* type of canes is only found in plain areas, which are thin or smaller than others but longer wire than the other two. *Jang-tiengngat* is used for binding edge or finishing touch of conical baskets. *Tieng-san*, as it is red in colour, mostly is used for making sleeping mat and strap. *Tieng-pi* is a very common cane found in hilly and plain region. It is also easily available in all parts of the hill region in the state. The Kuki craft objects like *Thul, Nam, Pheh* and *Bengkong* are purely made of cane. They also use cane for making the finishing touch of all baskets edge and corners.

4.2.3. Thul

Thul is a basket with four legs, supplied with a conical lid and is typically used to keep valuable things (Visual 4. 13: Thul/Lelpi, Kuki traditional basket for storing valuable itemsIt is crafted of finely split cane. In some place where cane is not available bamboo is also used. Shakespear's (Shakespear 27) describes the technic of making *Thul*, but the material used is not bamboo but of finely split cane. Because, in durability and texture, cane is more prefered than bamboo. The size may be different according to their need as purpose. Its four short legs are extended on the bottom corner with bamboo. Usually, the common and average size of *Thul* was twelve inches square at the bottom, twenty to twenty-five inches height and the mouth is a circle with a diameter larger than its bottom and its lid cover. The inner and outer layer was then polished with locally made wax. The wax made the basket waterproof. The weaving technique of *Thul* was very simple. Interlacing each of the *golphei* (cross) and *goltung* (down) alternately. *Thul* is also called *Lel* by some *Thadous* of Manipur. The basket is one typical unique traditional basket of *Kukis.* This type of basket is used by the *Kukis* for keeping of valuable items of the family. It is used to store all valuable properties of the family and serves as the present trunk box or wardrope. Therefore, if a man carrying *Thul* travel with women and children, people understand that the family are shifting their village.

4.2.4. Nam

Nam is a traditional Kuki strap used to carry baskets. There are two types of nam, Numei nam (Strap for women) and Pasal namkol/namkol (strap for man or yoke). Numei nam is simply the combination of flat cane band and the rope. Namkol has flat band made of cane, rope on both side and a wooden supporter. The flat band is made of cane, and the rope part is made of khaopi (wild fiber). The flat band is woven interlacing two wefts and two warp one after another. The width of the flat is about three to four inches and its length is around 12 inches. The remaining of the flat cane is the base of the rope part. Such that the rope is wove in three ply, with about three to four feet long in both side. The remaining flat canes are mixed with a fiber called "khaopi" and separated into three individual sections. Firstly, two sections are plaiting and followed by plaited and the third one was plaited so as to make the three-ply rope.

The process of making rope is very simple to learn. Take the whole fibre and separate it into three sections. First, the two sections of the fibres are plaided tightly in two ply after the individual section is plaited. The process is repeated until they obtain the required length. To make it into three ply, the third fibre is rounded and plaited tightly with the other two in one line till the end of the rope.

4.2.5. Bamboo (Go or Ro)

The Kukis call bamboo as *Go* or *Ro*. There are more than ten different types of bamboo. Each bamboo is used in different purposes. Bamboo used for making baskets or weaving purposes are naturally soft and difficult to break. The Kukis preferably use young bamboo i.e. one to two year old bamboo for this type of crafts, which they call it *"ningkum peng"* (last year bamboo shoots). Bamboos used for baskets crafts are Gova, Golhang, Gomi, Gopi etc. Hard and solid bamboos are used for household materials, equipment handles and large crafts. For hard and solid crafts, bamboo of two years or more are used. But, the Kukis mostly choose the bamboos which are older than five years above. The bamboos which bear star designs are the best material for this type of crafts. The Kukis call this type of bamboo as *"Ahsi kai"* (bearing star).

The traditional Kuki craftsman cut bamboo horizontally or perpendicularly according to their necessity. The bamboo tube is cut perpendicular for the essential length. The bamboo pole is split horizontally in a symmetrical system from the base. The bamboo splits are further split until they get their required size and shape. For baskets and binding purpose the biggest size of the bamboo split is one centimeter (S. Haokip). Also the inner surface of bamboo split is removed. The size of bamboo splits for house construction depends upon the requirement position for the structure.

The split bamboo for binding is called *'Naang'*and that for baskets is called *'Thiem'*. The bamboo after splitting into pieces for house construction is called *'He'*. To acquire *Naang* and *Thiem*, the Kukis cut up the bamboo pole into several pieces. The hard outer layer is mostly used after slicing off bit by bit. The binding wire which is locally called *Naang* has different types and characteristics according to its function. The *Naang* used for binding post and beams are bigger and longer, while house thatching wires are smaller in size so the rain water are not leaked. There are another two types of wire for

binding small and big articles. In respect of *'Thiem'*, the types and functions of bamboo splits are also different according to the size and purpose. The flatness and thickness of split bamboo for smaller baskets are lesser than that of big ones, and so on (L. Haokip). This proportion is advantage while crafting. The split bamboos which are used for house construction also have different size according to the functions. For thatching purpose, the 'He' is about one to two inches flat, while for others it is bigger than that.

In traditional Kuki society there is a popular saying *"Thing umlou naá Go kimang".* The simple translation is "Bamboo serves where there is no wood". From the above phrase, we can assume that, the Kukis use bamboo where there is no wood to use. Bamboo is the alternative material for constructing a traditional Kuki house where there is no enough wooden materials. Another argument can also be made from this phrase that, for construction of their traditional house, wood is the primary material for the Kukis and bamboo serves the secondary purpose.

4.2.6. Weights and Measures

Every Kuki household has three sets of basket for measurement. All the three sizes of measuring basket are same in the village, or its very neighboring village. The Kukis use these three measuring baskets to measure any paddy field products. The origin of the use of baskets and history is not known, but the practice passed on them generation to generation is still followed. It is believed that, there shall be sharing or borrowing of the practice of common and same sizes of measuring basket with the neighboring Kuki villages or other ethnic groups. One of the best examples of sharing or borrowing practices of the craft is that, the same sizes of three measuring basket are used by the Meiteis and Nagas in Manipur, but with different name. The practices may be as long as the barter system era.

The size of the measurement basket is fixed by the chief with his council members. According to the quantity of the harvest goods, measurement baskets are used. The smallest is called *"Milluh"*, the medium or middle one is called *"Pucha"* and the largest measurement basket is called *Longkai*[24] or *Sangpai*[25]. Approximately, one

[24] Longkai is a multi-purpose traditional basket of the Kukis. It is used for measuring of paddies also for carrying. The structure is almost same with other carrying basket. Longkai is crafted with double layer so that small grains like mustard seed can also be measured and carried.

milluh is equal to one kilogram, one pucha is equal to ten kilogram and one longkai is equal to twenty kilogram.

According to the size of baskets, the technique, the pattern and the materials used are different. Bamboo is the most common material. The *Milluh* and *pocha* has the same design and pattern of weaving. The smaller the basket, the thinner the split bamboo is. The warp and weft are woven interlacing one after the other. The pattern pr designs look like "V" shape. The making of the edge is traditionally called *"gei-heh". Gei-heh* is the most difficult task of weaving in this type of craft. The end of the split is bended and inserted on the body pattern and cut in such away that the end point is not seen. Four base corners are woven with cane.

The weaving pattern of the largest measuring basket is simple. The splits are thicker than that of the courmiddle basket. It is woven interlacing the warp and weft in a one-after-one pattern. As the splits are thick, the edge which they called *"agei"* is not made like the middle and small basket. Two small bamboo flats on both side and one at the upper are fixed with the wall by cane split. It is more handy and easy to lift the basket by its bold edge.

4.2.7. Cane and Bamboo Baskets

The Kuki tradition baskets made from cane and bamboo are given below.

a. **Bengkong:** It is made from bamboo or cane, open-work basket, with number of big holes in triangle shape, used for Carrying wood and water.

b. **Longkai:** Closely woven basket, used for measuring and carrying rice, vegetables.

c. **Thul:** A special basket made of neatly stripped bamboo or cane. It has four short legs with a conical lid. Used for storing cloths and valuable items. It was also used for carrying beddings and other good while shifting of house.

[25] Sangpai is not very common among the Kukis. The term and the article are mostly used by the Meiteis of Manipur for measuring paddies. The Kukis living near with the Meiteis used this as a measuring basket for trade and commerce purpose. The contain capacity or purposes of Kuki traditional basket Longkai and Meitei's Sangpai is same.

d. Paipeh: A small basket made of thin strips of bamboo, plaited together and crossing one another. Used for carrying small amount of jhum products and fruits (**Visual 4. 12: Paipeh, basket for carrying small grains in the field**

e. Kongvo: Smaller than *Paipeh,* materials and technique is more or less the same as that of *Paipeh*. Used for keeping and holding seeds while sowing in the field. The name *Kongvo* means waist hit.

f. **Pucha:** A basket used for measuring and keeping clean rice. The strips of bamboo or cane are closely inter-woven so as to make no small holes on it. In a good plaited *pucha*, water can be kept for a few minutes. *Pocha* which has cover is known as *Sinkhup* (VVisual 4. 11: Sinkhup**, basket for storing valuable items**

g. Miluh: The technical procedures and materials are the same as that of *Pucha*. *Milluh* is used for measuring rice for cooking.

h. Godal: *Godal* is made from small strip bamboo, woven closely in a circular shape. It is used for winnowing rice. The husks and broken pieces of the rice can be separated from the rice by use of *Godal.*

i. Doup: *Doup* is also a circular-shaped bamboo craft for drying food grains on the sun. The bamboo strips are bigger (about 1-2 mm), the size of *Doup* is 2-3 feet in diameter.

j. Tiengsa: Another circular-shaped bamboo craft, with numbers of small hole between every plaited bamboo strips. *Tiengsa* is used for separation of small grains from the big ones, for shifting the grains, shaking the tray from side to side so that the smaller grains fall down from the small holes.

k. Lukhuh: Lukhuh is the traditional rain coat or cap made of bamboo and wild leaves. Two types of *lukhuh i.e. Khuhbem* (cap) used on sunny days and *Khuhjom* used as rain coat. *Khuhbem* is circular in shape, while *Khuhjom* is oval shaped which can cover the whole body when working in the field. Two equal size of frame is made by bamboo strips with holes. The two frames are kept one after another; between the two frames leaves called *Thielna* are attached.

l. Nampeh: *Nampeh* is made of cane or bamboo and is used as a strap for carrying loads on head.

4.2.8. Other Bamboo Crafts

Besides the above-mentioned traditional bamboo crafts of the Kukis, there are also some bamboo crafts used in everyday life which we cannot exclude in this stury. These are:

a) **Twithei:** Twithei is a bamboo tube used for carrying and storing water. A bamboo locally called Gopi and Gomi is used being the biggest. It is about 3 feet in length. The middle chambers of the bamboo are hollowed and used.

b) **Thei-khong:** Another bamboo tube used for storing salt, chilli, curry-powders, fermented fish, crabs, meats and local spices. It is about 1 feet in length, having a lid to cover, made from the same bamboo

c) **Lheng/Me-kong:** Small plate or dish bowl made from bamboo called *Lheng* or *Mekong* is one of the commonly used kitchen utensils. One side of the bamboo is cut just 3 inches below the chamber and another is also cut 3 inches above the chamber. The base of the bowl is designed with four legs.

d) **Me-khe/Go-khe:** This is a bamboo spoon widely used by the Kukis. They cut the bamboo just adjacent to the chamber. From the chamber it is sliced out in 30 degree and leave 1-2 inches for handling. Big *Me-khe* for big pots is around 2-3 feet long, and for small pots it is about one foot.

e) **Touna:** A traditional stool of the Kukis called Touna has two different types. One made from animal hides called Savun-touna and another made of cane called Tieng-touna. A single sitter chair made of animal skin or cane strips supported by systematically plaited bamboo sticks.

f) **Sa-tul:** Sa-tul is a bamboo-rod for roasting sliced meat. A small bamboo tube of about 2-5 feet or a base thick portion of bamboo is hewn out so as to make the rod.

g) Ah-bom: Ah-bom is a basket made for keeping hen with small chickens at

night.

4.3. WOOD CRAFT

4.3.1. History

Wood craft is one of the most common craft. Wood is also the most used material for sculptural arts. The traditional wooden crafts are made by every section of the society for different utilization. The practice of wood craft is as long as the development of human beings or civilization. The Egyptians were the first to use wood craft. For the Kukis, the practice of wood craft will be older than their Indoi. The Kukis constructed their house, implements and tools long before they acquired Indoi. There were certain wood like *Sithing, Thing-he* and *Khaopi* mentions in the mechanism of Indoi.

The Kukis used different wood crafts in different way for different purposes. Traditionally, the Kukis used light woods for utensils and crafts which are used every day. Heavy and solid woods are used for the fixed structures like house materials. The Kukis used woods like *Vongthing, Thinghe, Shething, Gelthing, Phunchongthing, Gangpithing, Leihaothing, Teithing, Chehnouthing, Laithing, Dolthing, Kheuthing* etc. for their traditional craft in different technique. Some of the traditional tools used by the Kukis for wood craft are axes, adzes, chisels and Dao.

4.3.2. Descriptions of Wooden Crafts

a. Sum

Sum is a wooden mortar used for husking or pounding rice, chilli, pepper etc. The traditional mortars of the Kukis are of four different types they are *Sumpheng* (flat), Sumtung (rounded), *Chotlep* (Leg mortar) and Twichangsu (water rice mill). The rounded mortar is about 10-15 inches in diameter, 1-2 feet in height and 4-6 inches deep at the mouth for keeping rice. The shape looks like the hexagon collate. The flat mortar is in rectangle shape. Height and mouth are same with the rounded mortar. Some flat mortar has 2 or 3 mouths for pounding rice. Length of the flat mortar depends on the number of mouth. Chonlep and Twi-changsu have same mechanical process of working, except Chonlep is work with leg and Twi-changsu is working with water without human. The two methods are the mechanism of less human energy.

b. Suh

Suh is a wooden pestle for pounding in a mortar. In the middle of pestle, about one foot is hewn smaller for handling. For this type of pestle, a heavier, straight, solid and hard in nature wood is preferred.

c. Touna

Touna is a bench-like rough log planks used as home furniture for sitting. The traditional Kuki house has furniture made of wood and bamboo. The wooden furniture they use is made of a light wood. The desired size of wood is cut out; the four corners are left untouched for the legs and others to be hewn out.

d. Thing-kong

Thing means wood and *Kong* means plate or bowl. A large and good timber of light wood was selectd for these plates. They carved out the middle of the wooden circle, leaving about one inch thickness on all side, and design the handle and base according to its uses. Thing-kong is of different size. For washing purpose, a large wooden tub or plate was used (Visual 4. 20: **Thingkong (traditional wooden tub)** There is also a smaller size of wooden plate used for dining purpose. The smallest wooden dish or bowl for curry and chutney was also used. These wooden plates were used for on special occasions where a big fest was held. Due to its heaviness, they do not used wooden plates occasionally.

e. Khong

Khong is the Kuki traditional drum. The making of drum by the Kukis is one of the handiest craft. A log of round timber is hollowed out leaving nearly one inch thickness in a cylindrical shape. Both sides of the two hollow are covered with animal skin. A tree locally called *Vong-thing* (Gmelina arborea) and *Phunchong* (Eruthrina Stricta) which have soft tissue and easy to carve are mostly preferred.

f. Mithi-kong

The making of Kuki traditional coffin which they call *mithi-kong* is simply great. The making of traditional Kuki coffin shows the ability and creativity of the Kukis in the

field of Art and craft. The required length is cut from a single wooden log. The thickness of four sides of the wall and base is about 2 inches. From the upper surface, they carve out the remaining. The cover of the coffin is made separately from the same wooden plank. Making of coffin has some traditional rites according to the Kukis. The Tuchas (kin of girls' family) are responsible for making of coffin for the deceased. According to their custom, all the Kukis are Tucha of more than one family.

g. Tools and Implements

Making and application of tools for a variety of activities are one of the foremost craft. Woods are lighter, easier to shape and easily available than iron. Wood craft also applies in tools and implements they use. The handles of tools like knife, spades, Dao, mallet, axes, adzes, are made of wood.

h. Lupna

The specific traditional bed of the Kukis was made of wooden plank or bamboo splits called Chipeh. The wooden planks were made by the use of Dao, Axe and Adzes as there was no other means to cut the wood like saw.

i. Tangkhop

Tangkhop is the traditional stool hewn from solid log. Measuring 3-4 inches high and more that one foot in length. The Kukis call it Tangkhop, as it is also used as a pillow at bed.

j. Chempai

Chempai is a case for daos and knives. It is also hewn from wood log by the use of daos and adzes. The centre portion of the wooden log is carved out around one inch. A bamboo rod is inserted tightly in the two border wall where the daos are kept for carrying. There is also a strap made from cloth or elongated animal skin to hang on the waist.

k. Bukhe/Khelhei

It is a wooden spoon for scooping curry and rice. The design and shape are simple and looks like an ordinary stick. A good quality wood is chosen. According to their belief,

if the spoon breaks while serving the food or rice, male members of the family are not allowed to eat that food.

l. Pumjap

Pumjap is the traditional Kuki air pump used by blacksmiths. The technique and its funtions show the creativity and innovative ideas of the past Kukis.

4.4. WEAVING AND HANDLOOM

Clothing is one of the basic needs of mankind. The dress remains as an emblem of the community. The types of cloths depend on physical structure, environment, geography and social norms. In Indian tribal textiles is one of the oldest in the world, dating back to the Indus Valley civilization (Peters). India is the second largest textile industry in the world after China. Textile is one of the main industries of India. It constitutes the single largest industry in India (Dr. P. Chellasamy and N. Sumathi) Cotton, woolen, silk, readymade-garment; hand-crafted, jute and coir textiles are the textile industry segment of India (India).

With the advance of modern technology every ethnic group has also developed their technique of weaving. Among the looms, such as, loin loom, suspended loom, throw and fly shuttle loom, pit loom, jacquard loom and frame loom (All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association) found in India, the Kukis use loin loom and throw and fly shuttle loom.

The traditional *Kukis* used mainly loin loom (Visual 4. 2: A **Kuki woman in traditional weaving of cloth**Of late shuttle loom and computerized technique of weaving have been newly introduced among the *Kukis.* In the *Kuki* society, weaving is the work of women, and the tools needed for weaving are made by the menfolk. Traditionally, a girl child in the age group of 6 to 10 years learned the process and the practice of weaving by the use of *Aige-Hoh*[26] (U. J. Haokip) and then after obtaining

[26] Bark of plant (rhizome family) shredded into thin strips.

the skill they started weaving by the use of *Pat-sum*[27]. In this regard Lenthang (Lenthang 66) elaborated that

> "In the past, the *Kuki* young girls learned the process of weaving by the used of *Ai-ge,* and then wove with *Patsum* and thus produced small cloth. They wove usable cloth only after they know the process properly. This way, they produced different cloth for man and woman through their creativity. They also introduced various designs of clothes. Therefore every clan/tribe has their own traditional cloth with reference to their custom and culture. The people are named as *Kuki-Chin-Mizo* and they are the descendants of one family."

By helping the senior weavers they picked up the technique before they could start full-fledged weaving on their own. Thus, they learned the skill of weaving in different designs from their tender age. Every woman knew the art and processes of weaving, but there were some exceptional women who excelled in the skill. A young girl expert in weaving was highly honoured in the village and was the preferred choice for a wife or a daughter-in-law (Kimjalam).

The traditional *Kuki* women wove dresses only for their domestic use and not for commercial purpose. The women were superb artists of the loom (Guite 88). The *Kukis* produced cotton in their fields. Shaw (Shaw 19) states, all these (the clothes) are woven from cotton which is grown on their lands and spun by women. Those who produced cotton in their fields had to pass through different stages before it could be used for weaving. Their handloom and handicraft product depended on materials available in the agricultural field and forest.

4.4.1. History of weaving

The history of Kuki weaving is as old as their culture. The Kukis started weaving right from the time, the people settled down on this earth[28] (N. Doungel 30). Guite (Guite 76) traced the origin of weaving the pattern of *Khamtang* back to 500 BC. The traditional tribal weavers in Manipur mostly used the loin looms. They used the loin looms because they did not possess the knowledge of other methods of modern weaving. After the *Meiteis* in the valley became adept at weaving in fly shuttle loom in

[27] Short strands of thread generally of 10/12 inches cut out from the edge of woven cloth and tied together to make long strands.

[28] The *Kukis* came out of a cave called *Khul/Khur* which is believed to be under-earth,

1900 (Bhadur 9), some cooperative societies of Churachandpur District introduced it in 1983 financed by the state government.

According to the invocation of (Lenthang 125) given here, the clothes were already in use after "The Flood" mentioned in the Bible.

Chunga hungkon doh patchon silpon chun
Leiduppi-leithaopi mun a hung chun lang
Leisanpa sahlhongpi chunga kon in pu houvin
Hinjui yin, pa houvin hinjui in
Kholkip-kholjang mihemte leh sahiem te lah ah
Khindal lin hungpangin, hoidal lin hungpang in
Pondum, ponlhe, pon mongvom, chuleh pon geisen chun
Sim leija, hin mano-in, maleija hin mano-in
Pusha-pasha in hinjui in
Mitpha-hapha in hinjui in
Tidam ludam in hinjui in
Manmasi chate ding in.

Free translation

The cotton cloth, originated from above,
Come and fall in the land of fertile alluvial soil
May the good fortune of the ancient fathers accompany
You from the abode of *Leisanpa*[29]
May you be a protector and shield
Of all the human and animals of *Kholkip-kholjang*[30]
May you produce *Pondum, ponlhe, pon mongvom* and *pon geisen* cloths
In the whole world
May the good fortune of the ancient fathers accompany you
May your eyes and teeth be good
May your body and head be sound,
For all *Manmasi*[31] *[Kuki]* descendents

[29] *Leisanpa* is a man-Emperor of the earth. *Leisanpa* is the man "Adam" the first man according to the Christian Holy Bible (Genesis 1:27).

[30] The literal meaning of *Kholkip-Kholjang* is "the place where all living beings lives", i.e. what we called the earth. According to Khuplam Milui Lenthang this is the earth after the flood mentioned in the Old Testament of Holy Bible (Genesis 6, 7 & 8). Another version by William Shaw in his "Notes on the Thadou Kukis" claimed that it is located above *Kaithenmangpi* in Manipur on the right bank of the *Imphal River*. He also noted that the upper portion of this place of refuge is known as *Kholkip* where all the animals are said to have congregated, while the lower portion is spoken of as *Kholjang.*

[31] Khuplam Milui Lenthang is one of the person who belief that the *Chin-Kuki-Mizos* are one of the lost tribes of Israel-the descendants of *Manasseh/Manmasi*. Therefore, the Author, Khuplam Milui Lenthang used the term *Manmasi*, which is none other than *Kukis*. The author's version of *Manmasi* is not accepted by all.

The tribal weavers used four-ply acrylic wool in 1960s and 1970s (Bhadur). They split this four-ply wool into one or two-ply wool for weaving. They also used one and two-ply wool yarns to weave their cloths conveniently in assorted colours during 1980s (Bhadur 9). Today, some sections of tribes have acquired the art of weaving by using the fly shuttle loom. Above all, they were free from the hard and poor method of vegetable dye. The *Kuki* weavers' hand stitching or needle works was one of their expertise areas. Most of the Kukis started using needle for stitching before they acquired the skill of weaving. But nowadays, some embroidered textiles are also produced by them.

4.4.2. Method, techniques and tools

Some of the Kuki traditional method, techniques and tools use for weaving are given under:

a. Pat-heh

It is a locally made ginning machine from wood. The roller is geared to move in opposite direction. The roller in motion by means of a crank attached to the end of one of them moves by one hand in the crank and with the other feeds the machine with cotton.

b. Pat-sai

Pat-sai is a Kuki traditional weaving implement used for carding process. It is a simple and small bow consisting of a bamboo piece to which a carved string is attached to give it a shape of a bow. The operation cleans the cotton by thickening method. Thus, cleaned cotton gets ready for spinning.

c. Mui

It is one of the most common processes and implements in weaving for spuning. It is simple spike made of smooth, straight, thin and hard wood or in some cases an iron needle. One end of the spike is invested in the centre of a round flat spindle whorl. The other end of the spike has a notch for the purpose of holding the thread. Thus the "drop

spindle" is spun with the right hand against the thigh and turns it by rotating, while the cotton piece is held in the left hand.

d. Patlam

Winding is the process of transforming yarn from wanks to bobbins by a locally-made instrument called *Pat-lam.* The machine is a drum like structure with a wooden stand. The drum consists of a circular wooden rod and two wooden discs which are pinned at two ends of the rod.

The process of sizing is also one of the traditional forms of weaving. The process is very simple; a quantity of boiled rice with starch is squeezed through a cloth strainer in a tube of cold water. The dyed or the white yarn is taken through the solution and wound round on two bamboo poles stretched properly to dry. The dried, sized yarn is then cleaned from any size particle or dirt on it.

To shape a cloth, the two threads, the warp and the weft are interlaced in a right angle. The longer thread called *"atung"* (warp) is held by front-bar and the altitude thread called *"aphei"* (weft) is woven on it by shuttle. The designs are woven in desired colour of thread intermingled with the weft or colour-weft alone. Some cloth designs have no colour weft are woven from colour-warp and the colour-weft itself. Heald-bar plays the role of selector to weave the designs by selecting continuously one after another. The more designs in cloth needs more heald-bar. Weaving of *Saipikhup, Thangnang, and Khamtang* needs more than five heald-bars. To weave simple and plain clothes only one heald-bar is needed. Some designs like flowers and animals are included by the process of copying and weaved. This type of weaving needs only one heald-bar but the designs are crafted by hand process. The Loin Loom had a continuous warp of manageable length and warp beam was attached to two upright posts. The breast beam was attached to the back leather belt. The shed was affected by the half – head process operated by the hand. The shuttle was shot through by hand, and the weft was beaten up with sword.

The generic term of the tools used by the Kukis in their traditional loom is called *"Thilbu".* Name of the traditional Kuki loin loom implements are Chungkam (Front Bar), Tulet/Tuhdet (handle), Pumlong (bamboo-bar), Tanna (heald-bar), Lhiem

(sword), Khothei (shuttle), Tainam (breast-bar), Kongdop (back-strap). For the *Kukis*, weaving tools were and still constitute one of the most important assets for women. The *Kuki* women used to take their weaving tools with them when they got married happened to migrate or move temporarily to any place. They could easily set up the loom wherever they were, without much difficulty.

The cloths of the *Kukis*, produced in Loin-Loom have its advantages and disadvantages. The main disadvantage of Loin Loom is that it is very time-consuming. It can take weeks and even months for weaving a particular cloth. Weaving by carrying the entire load of the loom with all its tools and implements in sitting position for long hours is not conducive to their health. Moreover, the loin loom-produced cloths do not fetch high prices in comparison to machine-produced cloths which are more attractive. As such, the use of loin loom is not very profitable for the weavers. Buyers who have a good knowledge of the higher quality of loin loom-produced cloths vis-à-vis machine-produced cloths will prefer the former and will even pay a good price for it. In the beginning, the Kuki traditional weaving and textile had less development in embroidery. But nowadays embroidery has also come to be used in the textiles. The latest development in the field of weaving among the *Kukis* is the use of Computer Aided Textile Designing technology[32]. *Ms. Roslyn Khongsai*[33] and *Vahneithem Haokip*[34] are such *Kuki* designers or artists who have introduced the noble concept of computer technology to the *Kuki* textiles.

4.4.3. Dyeing

The traditional dyeing techniques of the *Kuki*s differed from region to region. They produce primary and secondary colour of threads from locally available tree leaves, flowers, grass, clay, ash, burn creepers, fruits and rhizomes etcetera. The solution of *Mukangpan/Mopi* (strobilbathus-flaccidifolius) plant leaves were used by repeating the

[32] This is my suggestion that, the used of traditional designs in this computer technology needs more technical research.

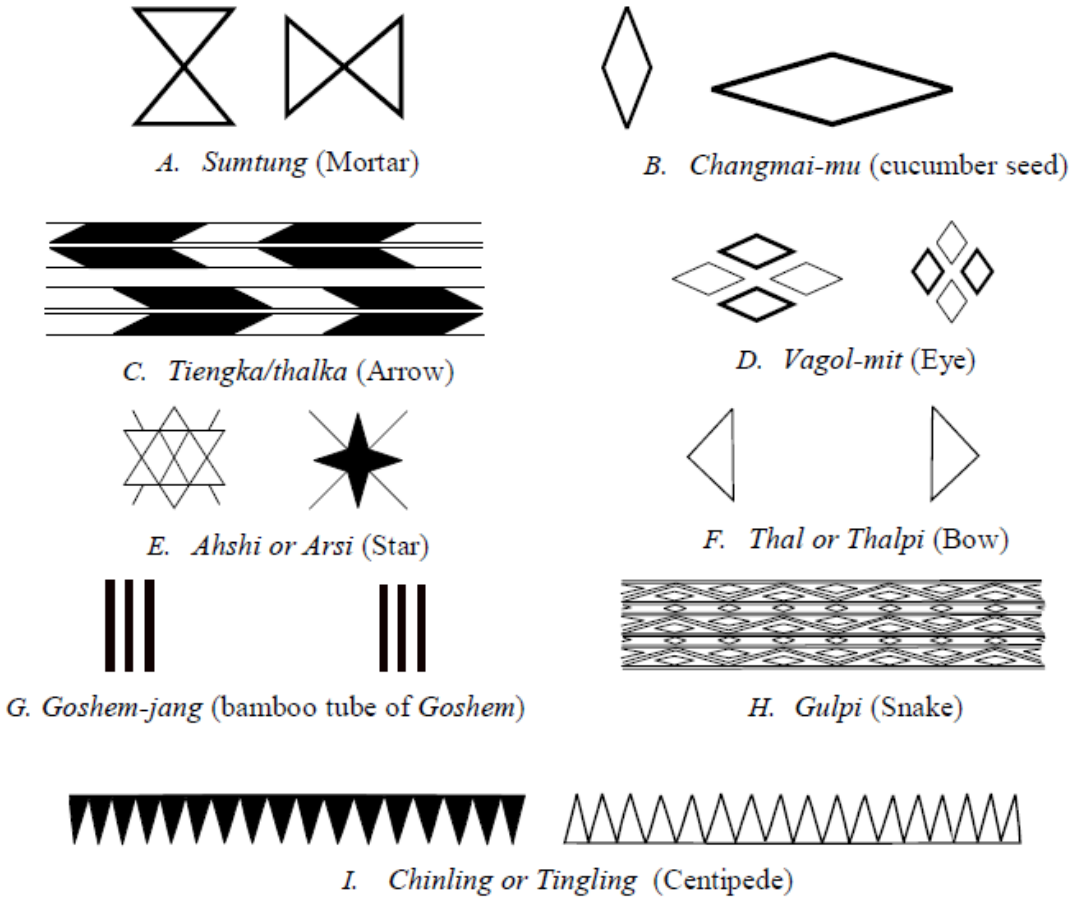
[33] *Roslyn Khongsai* a designer artist by profession introduces the *Kuki* traditional textile designs by the use of computer technology. She completes her Diploma course in NIIFT.

[34] *Vahneithem Haokip* completes her Diploma of Handloom Technology in Indian Institute of Handloom and Textile Technology, Guwahati. Presently she is working as a Project Officer in Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, Imphal.

process so as to concentrate the color and to obtain black-colored textile. Red colour was extracted from *Tournefortia-candolii* leaves, a creeper plant known as *Sonsan* and also from the leaves of tea plant. The crushed tuber of turmeric plant, diped it into water, stirred, and boiled solution to produce yellow dye. Locally known Maiphi and Inkum thing were mixed in a vessel containing water and heated until the content was boiled to produce navy blue cloth. The indigo dye was obtained from the plant *Strobilanthes-flaccidifolius* grown by them (Shaw 19).

4.4.4. Origin of designs

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.



Visual 4. 1: Symbols use in Kuki traditional clothes Their unique creativity in weaving

can be better understood by knowing their origin. There is also a possibility of sharing and borrowing with other ethnic groups of their neighboring areas.

The different designs and techniques of weaving are passed on from generation after generation. There is a saying, when the *Kuki* (*Songthu/Chongthu*) group of people came out from *Khur/Khul* a tiger obstructed them at the gateway. Their leader wove a cloth in the same pattern and colour of the tiger crossed the gateway and killed it. Therefore the whole family came out safely (Bhadur 123). Different name of the same cloth in the myth are prevalent among the *Kuki* tribes as *Laijiang* or *Ponchial Rulpuiyek* in *Aimol, Ponthal* in *Koireng* and *Thompui* in *Kharam.*

Another version pointed to the pattern of snake (python) in their traditional cloth was about the creative woman who wove near the stream. While she wove, she saw a python nearby. She crafted what she saw from the snake in the cloth. From that very pattern the cloth is woven till today by the weavers. Guite (Guite 76) mentioned that it was during some 500 BC. The name of that cloth is different from each tribe *Nuhmeipun* by *Kom, Khamtang* by *Thadou, Ponchial Rulpuiyek* in *Aimol* and *Ponthal* by *Koireng* (Koroung). The *Thadous* started weaving of their *Khamtang* with designs and patterns around 1930s[35].

The origin of *Changmai-mu* (cucumber seed) in their cloths was the sole and amazing creativity of women. While showing the seeds of cucumber in the field she was very fond of the seed, so it was woven in many of their cloths. The many colourful yarns used for *Puandums* evolved from the colours of the rainbow (Guite 79). The bird called *Vaphol/Pholva* (Horn Bill) feather pattern in black and white motif is also crafted by the Kukis which is so much connected with their culture (P. Haokip 168).

Table 4. 1: The Kukis traditional clothes used by man and women

Tribe	**Men**	**Women**
Aimol	*Ponte[@], Diaram, Amthal, Ponchial Rulpuiyeak[$], Ralngam Buchun*	*Saipikhup[#], Senchal[@], Arsian**

[35] In my interview with the elders, no one knows the period from which weaving of Khamtang was started. Which means the cloths is older than the elders to whom the information was collected. Some interviewee elders among Thadou clan re-corded their memory that during their childhood days the Khamtang of the Thadous are without any design pattern, but the colour pattern was red, yellow, white and green in black background.

Anal	*Lungvin#, Anal Bu, Wahrak Akal Bu*, Jatha@*	*Akhum Ahno#, Lungvin#, Wahrak Akal Bu**
Chiru	*Apa Ponte*, Bangpui Pon, Ponrobo, Lindu*, Ponhang*	*Nupang Ponve#, Aarsi Ponve#, Jidit Ponve#, Longdi Aam, Khongkhit, Nupang Ponte*, Aimo Suivo**
Chothe	*Awa-ampee*, Leingam Busun*, Phurup Aam*, Purum Pan*, Theiru-aam**	*Uikengchung/Uikeaam, Purum Nik#, Tongkaap#, Chaotanam/Hangsa-Hangset*
Gangte	*Puandum*, Thansuohpuan**	*Puandum*, Thansuohpuan*, Paunlaisen#*
Hmar	*Thangsapuan#, Hmarpuan#*	*Paunlaisen#, Hmar-am#, Hmarpuan#, Ngotekher#, Thangsapuan#, Mithipuan#*
Kharam	*Thompui Basal Ponsil@, Ponjadum@, Ponsenjal*, Thompui Lukhom, Tasaje, Thipusa Kongsoi, Thipusa Kongsoi.*	*Thompui Lukhom# , Ponbel Thuibao#, Ponbel#, Thompui Nuimaisa Ponsil**
Koireng	*Morvon, Ponsan*^, Ponthal^*	*Polang Pun khat@, La-um@, Polang Ketang@, Saipikhup#, Ka-a-am, Thaitei*
Kom	*Pasepun*, Pukhamjal*, Punchai*, Lukhom^*	*Punkophoi#, Puntre#, Kekir#, Numeipun*, Koram.*
Lamgang	*Takarbu*, Takar Bunglapol*, Takarlap**	*Takarbu*, Takar Bunglapol*, Takarlap*, Lamthin#, Nikti#, Diphun#, Woisen#, Takar Kinik#*
Maring	*Khoinganlu$, Langphai#, Karkhop#, Kungvere*	*Karkhop#, Kungvere*
Mizo	*Ngotekherh, Puandum, Thangsapuan*$*	*Ngotekherh, Puanchei#, Hmar-am#*
Monsang	*Elerpiin pon*	*Edung Enhii#, Echang#, Ekam Enhii@, Atrim Enhii#, Changkha Enhii,*
Moyon	*Kurkam Peen*, Wangjam Piin*	*Tudilili#, Tingpi#, Changkak, Tengpi Enhii.*
Paite	*B.A. Puandum*$, Puandum*, Ngotekherh*, Thangsuah Puan*$*	*Puandum*, Ngotekherh*, Paunlaisen#, Gungal Puan#, Kheaupheau#, Malam#, Aksipak#, Lianbuangthuam#.*
Purum	*Kotana*, Uikengchong*, Thalkuiam#, Ampun Hengkung sapa, Tangngam Basun*, Thamachet*, Purum Pal*, Laidil**	*Ekuok Punbil#, Ahopunsan#, Khentral#, Lamlangphanek#, Sandolik#, Sipersibup#*
Purum (Kom)	*Ponjaldum, Ponthal Lukom, Amachal Lukom, Koram*, Nahong*, Puandum**	*Sairem Ponlang*, Mukhamjar@, Khamtang#, Chalakok-in#, Saipuikhup#*
Simte	*Puanlaisan**	*Khangthah-Puandum#, Santeleniih#, Puandum#*
Sukte	*Puandum*, Tanching, Paunlaisen**	*Paunlaisen*, Zonik#, Khephlu#, Nikvom#, Nikphei#*
Tarao	*Leijing*^, Punthelona**	*Punthelona*, Lukphaivum*, Punsil#, Phurekthing#, Punshiljee#, Lungakkhu#, Leingamshun**
Thadou	*Saipikhup*, Mongvom*, Pondum*	*Saipikhup*, Thangnang*, Nineljem#, Khamtang#, Saipikhup# , Pondum*#*
Vaiphei	*Puandum**	*Khengkoi#, Thanso Punvek#, Gol-luipon#*
Zou	*Silpaun*, Pasal Paundum, B.A. Paundum*, Ngongon, Kangthapaun**	*Puandum#, Zoulamnik#*
@ = Wrapper, # = Lower garment/Skirt, * = Shawl, $ = Meritorious/High Status, ^ = Elders/Chiefs		

The cloths called *Thangnang* and *Saipikhup* have the design of *Gosem-jang*[36] and diamond-shaped design. The diamond-shaped design has two versions, the design of *Changmai-mu* (cucumber seed) and the belly portion of the python. The origin of most commonly used cloth *Saipikhup* have a different myth to trace with its literal name "elephant-knee". According to the one legend, the design of *Saipikhup* was woven from *Sampi-khup*, which means the pattern of pythons back side was coppied while facing downward and Khamtang was the belly portion of the python. The literal meaning of original name *"Sampi-khup"* is "back side of python" and was distorted to *Saipi* and they called it *Saipi-khup*. The meaning of *Saipikhup* is *saipi*=elephant and *khup*=knee. In the Kuki cultural history and culture, we found elephant only in the folktale of *"Chemtat-te Pu".* The *Saipikhup* cloth is used as wrapper by *Aimol, Koireng, Kom, Purum (Kom)* and *Thadou*. The *Thadou* families have two types viz. *Pasal-Saipikhup* (for male) and *Numei-Saipikhup* (for female).

4.5. MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

4.5.1. History

The Kukis are music loving people. Where there is any occasion their musical instruments are played. On festivals and happy occasions, music is followed by dancing and singing. They play some of their musical instruments even on death occasions. Their traditional musical instruments which are used in different occasions of celebration are *Pengkul, Khongpi, Khong, Dah, Lhemlhei, Pheiphit, Theile, Heijamsap, Selki, Goshem* and *Pehkhong*. All these musical instruments are played for every festive occasion like *Sa-ai, Chang-ai, Chon* and *golnop.*

A large number of musical instruments are found among different ethnic groups with different names. Instruments made of pipes, gourds, bamboo reeds, buffalo/*mithun* horns etc and the drum type of instruments are the most common with minor variations in the region. The traditional musical instruments are all monochrome in rhythm. Barthakur further categorized Indian musical instruments into four, *Avanaddha* (drum),

[36] The part of bamboo pipe in a *Kuki* musical instrument called *Gosem.*

[13] The *Thadou* term *TOHSAM* means incomplete work which was impossible to continue by other, used when someone died before completing his/her works (especially in craft), that incomplete work or craft was called *TOHSAM.*

Ghana (solid musical instrument), *Susira* (win instrument especially made of bamboo) and Tata (string instrument). Mofid statement on sharing of music is (Mofid)

> A basic characteristic of the ethnic music of Assam is its descending scale which distinguishes it from the raga-based or folk music from the rest of India. This style is shared by ethnic music of the hill people surrounding the state of Assam, and by the music of Thailand, Myanmar and China.

4.5.2. Drum

A drum is the oldest universally used musical instrument and monochromatic music which only can represent the whole music. Almost all the tribes of North East India use drum in their culture as a musical instrument. It is integral part of their music of all time for the Kukis. In any occasion the Kukis cannot sing a song without a drum. They also have log-drum as a time keeper and to prevent the field from wild animals. It is made from a hollowed out wood like *Vongthing* with an animal skin like the membrance.

4.5.3. Goshem

The *Goshem* is a traditional Kuki musical instrument like a Scotch's bag-pipe. Goshem is the most valuable musical instrument of the Kukis. It is made of dry hollow gourd into which are inserted bamboo tubes of different size and length. In the past, the Kukis made the fiddle from the outer skin of a bamboo by loosening a strip, without detaching it at its ends, and raising it up and inserting a piece of stick to act as a bridge (Shakespear 28). Nowadays, it is made of copper plate. The number of bamboo tubes is different among the clans of the Kukis. The Goshem of the Thadous has seven tubes, Mizos have nine tubes (Lianhmingthanga 28) and the Mru's Goshem has six bamboo tubes. The bamboo reeds are fixed with wax to one side of the gourd in two rows (Guite 32). The Mizos fixed five of the reeds at the gourd of about two inches distance from the other four tubes of which are tied together but slightly slanting outwards, other Kukis attach four bamboo tubes in the front and three in the rear each with a hole.

The performer makes various sound notes by blowing into the mouthpiece and opened or closed the holes with the fingers. There is a very interesting story that among the Koirengs the descendants of Chongthu playing Goshem inside the village was banned, because young girls liked or loved only a boy who could play it (Lhungdim). The

Mizos called it *Rawchhem* and the other Kukis called it *Goshem or Rotchem*. Lianhmingthanga mention about the sound notes and it's playing technique as

> "To make different notes of sound, holes are made at the desired spot of the tubes. Blowing is done at the tapering end of the gourd. To produce sufficient sound a hard blow is required to be made and different notes of sound are made by blocking or opening the holes in the tube with fingers."

Here, the statement of (Lianhmingthanga 28) is only for the instruments which are hard to blow. The fine instruments made by professionals are easy to blow and do not require hard blowing.

The person who first used Goshem and from which period it was used is not known, but it is the traditional musical instrument of the Kukis (L. Haokip). Some interviewee argues that the *Goshem* was the musical instrument of *Thilha*[37], and the Kukis took it from them. There are two versions about the origin of *Goshem*. One is, *Goshem* was the musical instrument of *Thilhas.* The other version says that, the *Thilhas* stole it from *Changkhatpu*[38]. About the first version, (T. Singson) states that,

> "There was a saying that Goshem was first used by the Thilhas. This was wrong, because how the Thilhas could make the Goshem without having implements like knife. The Changkhatpu was the first person who played the Goshem. The seven brothers of Thilhas stole Changkhatpu s' Goshem, broke the gourd and divide one each to them saying that "if one person (Changkhatpu) can play it well why shouldn't we?" But, when they played one each they cannot play like the sound played by Changkhatpu. So they returned back to him. Then Changkhatpu re-assemble it in a new gourd. A bronze which is a very precious iron family for the Kukis in the past known as Mailang was cut and thinned by knife. It was not the musical instrument of Thilhas; it was made by the Kukis."

Just before the age of *Chollai-vom*[39], Goshem was taken from the *Thillha*. The seven brothers of *Thillha* played one each made the Kukis tempted. They killed the seven

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[37] Thilhas, according to their belief is an evil spirit. There is a saying that, once, human beings and this evil spirits called Thilhas settled together. But due to their clashes, gods make them apart and ordered both not to disturbed each.

[38] Changkhatpu is a man, single man living alone.

[39] There was a tale about the relationship of the human and Thilha. The Thillha used all the valuable things in a bad way and because of their immoral practices, God punished them and all their valuable things are taken by human. The way how they take their valuable things are taken from them only by humans. The Thillhas are all killed except one pregnant woman which was mention in the folktale "Chollai-vom". The pregnant evil spirit complains to God that human had killed them and she was the

brothers and took it and compiled them into a single musical instrument to be played by one man. From there humans made it in a gourd and played by a single person. Because of this, the Kukis do not play Goshem in the jungle. Among the Kukis, Koms were the first to use the traditional wind musical instrument *Goshem.*

The cost of Goshem was rupees four during 1940s, which was equivalent to the cost price of one mother pig. Now the price of Goshem is 1,500 to 2,000 and that of mother pig cost around rupees 20,000. The above two different priceses show that the value of Goshem has gone down may be because people give less importance to it.

As a sole cultural material and musical instrument of the Kukis, Goshem is mentioned in many of their folktales and songs. There was also a popular saying quoted by Pu Ngamkhothang (N. Haokip), "like the seven bamboo tubes of Goshem make a good musical sound, unity is strength." In folktale of Khupting & Ngambom's love story, after Khupting was dead, Ngambom cut the branches of banyan tree in the middle of the paddy field of Khupting's family. While Ngambom cut the tree branches, he played Goshem in remembrance of his lover Khupting. The song was

- *Ka semgo pan tang*
  Onthing lel sang ah
  Ting'o dalang kasaina hinte (T. Singson)

Free translation

Let me play my Goshem
High-up on the tree
In remembrance of my beloved Khupting

- *Semgo dalang kasai jin*
  Khupting naonu Sielneng in
  Sihtwi damtwi hindom o (N. Haokip)

Free translation

I play sorrowful tunes by Goshem
Sielneng, younger sister of my beloved Khupting
Bring me some comfort and solace.

---

only survival. But, God suggest her to put Chollai-vom into the stream where human's water used to take water for drink. So, the central eyes of human become black and they cannot see Thillhas but the Thillhas can see humans.

There were a number of folksongs related with Goshem.

1. *Semgo gel kamut kah*
   Angeijo-jo laitol lenpi nang'e
   Lanu gel kasai kah
   Tongnem jo angpon in pom nang'e. (T. Singson)

Free translation

Two Goshems I play
I shall carry along the sweeter-sounding one,
Two maidens I fancy,
I shall marry the gentler one.

2. *Golngainu e natongso*
   Longtwi kipe Jangsemgo toh bang'e. (N. Haokip)

Free translation

My beloved girl your sweet voice
Is as sweet as the sound of Goshem polished with Longtwi[40]

3. *Nang golnu nang golnu*
   Kotlhang a twi gasoh o
   Naso lou le laidang a leng tang e.

Free translation

Oh my dear, Oh my dear,
Fetch me water from near the door
If not, I shall fency another maiden

4. *Mi Somnu hoima chelou*
   Eini somnu hongjang a che
   Lenna selung kadong e, toingai.

Free translation

Other Som ladies are hale and hearty
My Som lady has left untimely
I am heart-broken, my dear.

When Goshem was played, everyone wanted to dance. Even the Thillha wanted to dance. So, they played a game popularly known as Bembong-kou. The boy would play his Goshem and a girl would hold a small basket in hand. When the Goshem was

[40] Longtwi is water made from the material called Longchang to polish the copper plate used in musical instrument like Goshem and Lhemlhei. Longchang is rubbed on the stone or iron with some drops of water. The solution substances are mixed with a little water and then poured into the musical instrument where the copper plates are there.

played, Bembong would come and thus, would rotate. After playing for some time, they sent it back by playing the Goshem itself (N. Haokip).

The detailed play of the game narrated by one of the interviewee, Letkholun is given below (L. Haokip)

> If the *Bembong* came, the *Miluh* which was in the girl's hand would rotate without rotating the hand of the girl and rotated by anyone. This did not happen to everyone. *Bembong* did not come and dance with some girls. If a boy did not know how to send back *Bembong* or who could not play the music of sending back *Bembong*, they never played the game. It was believed that, if *Bembong* was not sent back successfully, there could be a bad happening to the girl who carried *Miluh*. Therefore, every girl did not want to play the game. Boys who played this game should know how to call and how to send back the *Bembong*. To send back the *Bembong*, they played their *Goshem* by saying *"Chetan chetan*". If *Bembong* did not go by saying *"Chetan chetan"* they started using some immoral words like "*Cheto-cheto sul jummo nu, nasul jummo nabol ham?"* Then only the dance of *Bembong* would stop. They even forcefully threw out the *Miluh* when it did not stop dancing even by saying such immoral words. He also said that, "one night while we were playing the game, as I did not believe that the *Bembong* rotated by itself, I did touch personally and confirmed that it rotated by itself. On that night we could not send it back, so we threw away the *Miluh* from our *Somnu's* hand."

During our discussion about the game *"Bembong-kou"* in the interview, one of the respondents said that "I was converted to Christianity in 1997. I don't remember all the old practices of our culture. I also don't want to describe all because some words are against Christianity"[41].

The Kuki young men also used *Goshem* to express their inner feelings to their loved ones. Through *Goshem* they gave various messages like "How are you?", "What do you do? I am thirsty; please bring me water etc. and the girl understood what he said through the tune and replied through her musical instrument called *Lhemlhei*. They could also sing various traditional songs.

[41] I was told by my interviewee Pu Lunkholet that when Goshem was played, everyone wants to dance; even the Thillhas wants to dance. So, they played a game popularly known as Bembong-kou. The boy will played his Goshem and his girl with a small basket in his hand. When it was played, the basket in the girls hand will turned rotated. After playing for some time, they send back by playing the Goshem itself. During our discussion about the game "Bembong-kou" in the interview, he also said that "I was converted to Christian in 1997. I don't remember all the old practices of our culture. I also don't want to describe all because some words are against Christianity".

4.5.4. Lhemlhei

Another traditional Kuki wind musical instrument is *Lhemlei.* This type of musical instruments is also found in Tibet, Burma [Myanmar] and in some parts of East Asian countries. Barthakur assumed that it came to Assam from Tibet [and] Burma (Barthakur 124). *Napali [Nepali]*, *Bodo* and *Adi* groups also use this type of instrument.

4.5.5. *Pengkul* (Trumpet)

According to (White), trumpet was used at least 3500 years ago. The first trumpet was the trumpet of King Tut. They were played on a special broadcast by the BBC in the 1930s. The wind musical instrument Trumpet is called Pengkul or Sumkon or Totorot by the Kukis. The Kuki traditional trumpet was made very handy that different sizes of bamboo called Nat tube was joined. The smaller tube was inserted on the bigger tube and so on. Four bamboo tubes are joined and one end-point forefinger size is where to be blown and the other end-point was joined with a dry empty gourd or mithuns' horn with big open mouth. The whole length can be more than five feet.

4.5.6. Gong

Regarding the origin of gongs, the earliest written mention of the gong was in china in the 6th century. In these ancient documents, the Chinese claim that another culture from Central Asia introduced it to them. The Chinese used gongs for many ceremonial functions. Now, it is a known fact that the gong is one of the oldest musical instruments in the world.

In India, most of the ethnic groups use Gong as musical instrument and symbol of wealth. They also place it as of the highest cultural value. It is also used especially by the *Chin-Kuki-Mizo*[42] group who trace their origin to the cave. Shakespear (Shakespear) states that, the gongs used by the Kukis are mostly imported from Burma. As much as Rs. 150/- being paid for large ones, but the most prized are sets of three

[42] The Mizos in Mizoram, Kukis in other part of North East India and Bangladesh and the Chins in Myanmar (Burma) trace their origin in cave, somewhere in China. They are ethnically, culturally, linguistically one and same people.

small gongs, each with separate note, on which three skilled performers can produce something resembling a tune.

The importance of gong lies not only in its utilitarian value but also because of its cultural value of recollection. The importance of gong as socio-cultural symbol is significant in that the *Kukis* continued to keep alive this practice to keep abreast with their home-identity[43]. Some of the Gongs generally used by some ethnic groups in North East India are: *Jatha, Therka, Kowjang* of *Bodos; Dahbu, Ding-dung, Tongrep* of *Kukis; Membew, Inntowai* of *Zemi Nagas; Lenong, Lupi* of *Mishings; Makati, Jhaj* of *Tea-Tribes; Jamtong, Chang-an* of *Tai-Buddhists* and *Saraileo, Taka* of *Tiwas.*

In the past, wealth for the Kukis was estimated by their possession of the number of mithun, gong, necklace and rice. Gongs were highly valued and it was the most valuable price among their assets. Among the Kukis, gong have different names depending on clan and region. The Chins of Myanmar call it *Zamp*i, the Mizos of Mizoram call *Dar, Darbu, Darkhuang, Darmang* and *Darbenthek.* Other Kukis call it *Dah, Dak, Dahbu, Dahpi* and *Dahcha*. For convenience of communication, the term *Dah, Dahbu, Dahpi* or *Dahcha* is applied for this essay.

J. Guite's (J. Guite) statement on the Kukis' gong was "It is a peculiar custom of the Kukis that gong, which is not locally produced and which has to be procured from long distances, has constituted the core item of their cultural practice." Gong is not a luxury good nor is it a thing only of royalty; it is a necessity to them. Gongs are a symbol of prosperity for the *Kukis* too, like in China. Guite also gave detailed use of gong by the *Kukis* as

> "….Certain ritual cannot be performed without it. It constituted a necessary part of the bride's price….On the occasion of death it constitutes a prime importance. It was also one of the commonest musical instruments during all festive occasions. For musical purpose one large gong with a set of three small gongs, each with separate note, are used. Certain gongs were used as war drum. Thus, the utility of it will go on as one observes their cultural practices. The colonial observers were surprise to see how this item had constituted part of their core cultural symbols when they are not able to manufacture them…."

[43] What I mean here is the original identity.

The Kukis believed that gong was the wealth of river gods or mountain gods. A person who possessed this was considered wealthy and could even encounter the wrath of the spirits. There was a popular song among the Tedims

The traditional Kuki gong is of three types *Dahpi* (large gong), *Dahbu* (three gongs smaller than *Dahpi* having different tone or note) and *Dahcha* (smallest gong).

a. ***Dahpi:*** *Dahpi* is of different size, having more than thirty inches diameter and above. It can be used in every occasion as calling bell for committee, for church service, as an alarm in the time of enemy attack, death ceremony and to drive the beasts away (Lianhmingthanga 27). The large-sized gong is higher in price and can produce more vibration of sound. As this is the biggest gong, it is used in most of the important festivals or occasion. The *Dahpi* is used for all important cultural practices like bride-price, *Longman* (ex-gratia), dancing, singing etc. Two persons carrying *Dahpi* beat it at random and move slowly by the side of the dance performed in any festive occasion (Guite 160). But, in case of death ceremony, it is hanged somewhere near where the death body is kept and beaten randomly.

b. ***Dahbu:*** *Dahbu* is a set of three medium-sized gong having three different notes. In the past *Dahbu* was normally played by three performers. But now a well-skilled modern artist can play alone the three gongs, hanging one on each side of his body with rope and one in his hand. Each of these gongs has a different note or tune like *Doe, Ray* and *Me* of tonic sol-fa[44]. There is no restriction as to when these gongs are to be beaten. It is however beaten on any occasion mostly during festivals and celebration of some important events (Lianhmingthanga 26).

c. ***Dahcha:*** It is the smallest gong used by the Kukis. *Dahcha* is beaten in the time of merry-making and on occasion like festivals and ceremonies. It is mostly

[44] Tonic sol-fa is a method of naming note pitches commonly used. According to Wikipedia, it uses a system of musical notation based on movable to do solfege, whereby every tone is given a name according to its relationship with other tones in the key: the usual staff notation is replaced with anglicized solfege syllables *do, re, me, fa, sol, la, ti, do* or their abbreviations *d, t, l, s, f, m, r, d.* It is similar with the *sa, re, ga, ma, pa*…etc of Indian Classical music notation.

> beaten for accompaniments of other music. It is beaten in such a way that it produces two sounds *Doe* and *Me* by holding and releasing it alternately.

Not only as a musical instrument, the Kukis of Manipur use gong as a bride price and *Longman*[45]. For both bride price and *Longman*, Gong is compulsary. According to *Lenthang* (Lenthang), if a man dies, his mother's relatives should kill an animal to show their affection to the dead person. And the deceased family should give *Khiba* (necklace), *Dahpi* (gong) or *Mithun* to their maternal family for the memorial of their beloved son (Lenthang 59). The practice is called *"Longman del"* in *Thadou Kuki*. Not only for this, if a person is killed by someone, the person should give a large gong to the deceased family as for his or her pillow.

The gong is included in bride price of the Kukis, especially the *Thadous*. Not to mention all the bride price, Gangte (P. M. Gangte 148-174) articulated the bride-price structure of Thadous as: *Doungel* two *Dahpi* and two *Dahbu, Haokip* two *Dahbu, Hangsing* one each *Dahbu* and *Dahpi*. The average price fixed for one gong is between rupees 5000 to 10000 which depends on the area, status of both family and bride-groom relationship. The giving and taking of gong as a bride-price is still practiced in theory. 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. Only a weathy family gives the concrete gong in the bride-price. Othewise it can be given in kind or cash. But the Mizos do not give or take gong as a bride-price. Lianhmingthangs clearly gives the reason why they stopped giving or taking of gong as the bride-price.

> "… the use of those gongs as a bride-price was rarely heard and parents never raised demand for it. The reason behind this was due to their superstitious belief that associates bad omen with gongs occur on the couple. In one of a Mizo legends 'Chawngvungi and Sawngkhara' a special gong named 'Darhuaisen' was demanded by the parents of a very beautiful girl, called Chawngvungi who was won over by an ugly boy named Sawngkhara, who was said to possess in hin the power to exite love magically called philter. Unfortunately, there was a traditional saying that to give or take that kind of gong as a bride-price was taboo. A short while after marriage the bride, Chawngvungi fell ill and died instantly. From this legend there came a popular Mizo musical song which purported how heavy the bride-price of

[45] Longman is a price paid to a decease family if the death was caused by unnatural death or killed by someone knowingly or unknowingly.

> Chawngvungi was and the song mostly played and harmonised with a set of three gongs called Darbu.

Guite Vanlaluat (Guite 167) clearly gives how valuable the gong was for the Kukis since several decades back and also narates the history of 17th and 18th century in Myanmar.

> The value of Dahbu had been estimated to the life of a chief. There is a history in connection with this. Between the 17th and 18th century, there was a famous *Dak* (gong) in *Kalzang* village (Myanmar). It was the pride of the villagers and the envy of the neighbouring chiefs. The sound was loud and vibrating. At the time, the *Kalzang* chief was *Khuptuang*. The chief of *Saizang* (also in Myanmar), *Thawmte Mangsum* wanted to possess the gong. He thought of a plot and kidnapped the *Kalzang* chief along with some village elders, and demanded the gong and expensive beads as ransom, for their return. However, the *Kalzang* people did not want to part with the Heirlooms and they managed to save it and brought back their chief's corpse.

There is another legend connected with gong states by (Guite 168).

> There were two orphaned brothers, *Liando* and *Thangho* of *Chimnuai* village in Burma during the 13th century. One day, *Thangho* sneezed while they were hiding from their enemies. It frightened a wild bear that fell down a cliff and died. The meat was divided among the villagers and the two brothers were given only the stomach. However, fortune smiled on them and when people came to enquire the musical sound they heard, they hid it and played on an old broken gourd.

Related with the above legend, there is a song. The song is played by the three sets of medium-sized gong called Dahbu and large gong called Dahpi. The music tune is used as opening and closing signature tune for Hmar programme in All India Radio, Imphal Station. The first line of tune (tonic sol-fa)'d' is for Zampi [Dahpi]

		d				
|d	:r	|m	:r	|d	:r	|d
Lian	do	te	U	nau	U	nau

d						
|m	:r	|m	:r	|d	:r	|d
Dar	ze	nge	in	tum	in	tum

d											
| m	:r	| d	:r	| m	:r	| m					
Dar	zeng	mah	kan	tum	lo	ve					
		d				d					
| d	:r	| m	:r	| m	:r	| d	:r	d:-	|	:-
Lian	do	bur	chhe	te	kan	tum	kan	tum			

Liando te U-nau U-nau
Dar ze nge in tum in tum
Dar zeng mah kan tum love
Lian do burchhe te kantum kantum

Translation

Ye! Liando and your brother,
What cymbals do ye sound?
We sound no cymbals,
We sound only empty gourd.

4.5.7. String Instrument

Some of the Indian stringed musical instruments are *Dilruba or Esraj, Gotturadhyam, Santoor, Sarangi, Sarod, Sitar, Surbahar, Tanpura, Veena* and *Violin*. Almost all the instruments mentioned above are found and used in North East India. Locally made of four strings generally called *Sarinda* is also used and played by most of them.

The string musical instruments of North East India are not so typical. The ethnic group commonly known as Tribals, who followed Christianity from British rule modernized their traditional habits and used western musicals too. However, this does not mean that all their traditional musical instruments have vanished. They used it for their traditional dance, ritual performance and on very special occasions. The *Bodos, Dimasas, Deoris, Kukis, Khasis, Nagas, Mishings, Tai Buddhists* and *Tea Tribes* use it, but the name, structure, style, concept and uses are different. The same kinds of instruments are also found in other countries.

4.6. COSTUME AND ORNAMENTS

The traditional costume and ornaments of Kuki men are Dhoti, Boitong-sangkhol, Delkop, Tuhcha-kisom. And that of women are wrapper, petticoat, necklace, chao (bangle), earring etc (Visual 4. 21: Kuki **traditional stires for cultural dance**

4.6.1. Khi (Necklace)

The red beads or dark amber necklace is an ornament worn around the neck as a fashion by women. The traditional necklace of the Kukis is called *Khi/Khiba/Khichong*. *Khipi* is the main and biggest bead of the necklace in the centre and *Khichong* is the group of beads used as necklace. Besides the red bead necklace, the Kukis use a number of necklaces. The Kuki necklaces are made of different materials like coins, conch-shell, wood, claws and teeth of animals, stones and even pearl beads. The most important traditional Kuki necklace is red in colour, made of beads[46]. It is the most valuable costliest of women ornaments. The beads are pierced and threaded. While threading the beads, the biggest is in the centre of the thread and then the smaller one goes on and the two last smallest beads are at the end of the thread.

For Kukis, necklace is not only an ornament; it is indispensable to them in their socio-cultural life. A Kuki woman who wears a good number of necklace signifies a good and well to do family. Women of wealthy family wear more than ten necklaces. In Kuki culture, it is also use as *Longman*[47], *Numei man* (bride price), *Upa-naopa kilutna*[48], *Unu lutna*[49] and *Nule pa lutna*[50]. In the price of a bride, necklace is compulsory. It is presented to the girl's family by the boy. The girl's family will present another necklace to their daughter as dowry. There was a lamentation song, where the girl was very upset because her families did not present her a necklace (T. Singson).

Lainu ka lhaolha setna
Sanglai lel'ah kikhai jo Jolam bakhi

---

[46] A bead is a decorative article in different size. It is made of a material like glass, plastic, wood and stone.

[47] *"Puten tute longman adel"* is a corps price taken by maternal families to keep the relationship between the mothers family and fathers' family. In case of un-natural death cause by someone knowingly or unknowingly, two pieces of necklace beads are compulsory in the ex-gratia or corps price.

[48] *"Upa-naopa kilutna"* is a memorandum of understanding when two brothers have any misunderstanding, to compromise they present each other or the wrong one will give to the other.

[49] *"Unu Kilut-na"* is a barter given to elder sister when a younger sister married before her elder sister. She used to give the necklace to her sister.

[50] *"Nule pa lutna"* is a presentation given to mother and father by their sons or daughters to say sorry, when there was a great misunderstanding in the family, which were happened due to the negligence of sons and daughters.

Free translation

> Oh! My father assets necklace, go, hang yourself at the *sanglai*
> Being a woman you are the sadness of my soul.

To praise the beauty of their traditional necklace there is a folksong

> *Saothim noijah mangoh e naba khi*
> *Sahlhong tolom jangvai tin salsoh e.*

Free translation

> The shine from your precious necklace
> Brighten every nock and corner of the house

About this red coloured beads for necklace, most of the interviewees responded that, though it is popularly used, no Kuki artisan produce it, except the threading process. Jamkhomang (M. J. Haokip) told that, "during 1970s, a man from Touthang clan sold necklace, he never said where he took the beads. According to him, the seller said "buy it when I am alive, after my death you will not find it, as I am the only person who knows the place where it is found". Another interviewee states that, "…though it is very important, the Kukis imported it from outside. After the WW II 1948-49, a person name **Lhingthong Touthang** who was a businessman sold the necklace in our area i.e. in Ukhrul District. Lhingthong told that the necklace he sold was imported from Jorhat in Assam" (N. Haokip). Otkhokhai states that, "it is believed that this necklace is a borrowed material from Burma or China. It is a type of stone dug out from earth somewhere in South East Asia continent" (O. Haokip).

Necklace is mentioned in some of the Kuki folktales, like *Galngam & Hangsai, Tonotte, Suvai-kenu, Koinu Mei Saojo; Koipa Mei Saojo* (L. Haokip). All these tales are related with *Lhomis*[51]. The folktale of *Galngam & Hangsai* goes like this:

> "According to the Kuki folktale, *Galngam & Hangsai*, the beads of Kuki traditional necklace was taken from a place called *"Lhomi-gam".* Hangsai, the hero of *Lhomis* and a man called *Galngam* were best friends. *Hangsai* who knew the art of magic once invited his friend *Galngam* to his village *Lhomi-gam. Galngam* visited the village of *Hangsai* and saw the beads of necklace fruits of a

[51] Lhomi is a tiger-man, which means human who can turn himself into wild tiger form at anytime. The Kukis believed that, this tiger-man has extra-ordinary power. Their physical structure was human; think, talk and work like human, but they have the power of tiger and habit of eating flesh.

> tree. The villagers *(Lhomis)* ate those beads as it was their best fruit. So, the beads were also found in the excretions of the *Lhomis.* For humans, those red beads are the best necklace for womenfolk. *Galngam* liked it so much that he collected as much as he could. In the tree there was one big and shining bead which *Hangsai* told his friend *Galngam* not to pluck the big one in the main branch. *Galngam* pretending to fall down took those big beads. *Hangsai* shouted in a very angry voice, but his mother and father told him that, a mistake by a friend once should be ignored. *Galngam* returned home and met a young girl on the way. He then told the girl "if you marry me I will give you the beads for necklace". And the girl replied that her father would also bring for her. Both of them went to the girl's house and the girl was none other than her own daughter…"

It is interesting to know that some researchers had done an experiment to make the hole of the beads bigger, but they could not. They tried further and the beads broke. According to Ngamlhun Lhungdim, "there was also a saying that after Galngam, those who wanted beads for necklace, plucked from a tree in *Lhomi-gam* and brought for their uses." Here is a question, Are the traditional Kuki necklace beads fruits of a tree or what else? In another simple experiment, a bead was kept in fire, and it was not burnt, only its colour changed. If these beads are fruits, it would have been burnt into ashes. Therefore, it must be a substance of some precious stone or a solution of chemical, but not fruit of a tree. The Kukis might have called *Hangsai* and its people *Lhomi* or tiger-men because of their power, advancement, civilization and typical culture. Moreover, the beads might not have been fruits of a tree, but got from a market or somewhere it was hanged.

The Kukis also used necklaces made of coins, conch-shell, wood, claws and teeth of animals, stones and pearls. In the past, coins were more valuable than currency notes for the Kukis. In their barter system business transaction they preferred coins as it could be used as necklace. They bored holes and with cotton threads, strung them and hung them down their neck (Guite). R.A. Lorrain recorded that

> "… On our first reaching the country we found that the *King's Rupee* and the *eight anna piece* were practically the only coins that were known, and then these were known only by a select few who had managed in one way and another to obtain them, boring a hole through the top and hanging them round their necks as an ornament. The smaller coins were practically unknown, but they soon took a fancy to the *pice piece* for an ornament, and one of the great difficulties with us was that they did not require the money and therefore would not part with any vegetables or rice. … My wife wishing to purchase some egg fruit from her,

> offered her a two anna piece, equal to two pence, for them, but there was nothing that would please her save my wife giving to her four pice, which is equal to four farthings, in order that she might hang them round her neck as an ornament. We tried to explain to her that two annas were twice four farthings, but she sincerely believed that we were trying to rob her, and ultimately she went off very satisfied with her four pice, half the amount she had at first been offered."

Conch-shell is another material used in their necklace. Conch-shell with a pattern of small circles with a dot in the middle of each was mostly used by the Kukis. A hole was bored at the wide end, through which passed a string whereby the shell was attached to a necklace of red beads. The Kukis also wore pieces of wood as necklace. This shows their fondness for natural things. Necklace with wood pieces were mostly worn by children and patients caused by social evils, which they called *Kaose-pe*[52]. For this preventive necklace a particular tree locally known *"Songko-thing"* was used. A piece of *Songko-thing*, less than half inch was cut and tied with thread and hung round their neck.

The Kuki necklaces also present claw, horn and teeth of animals. The use of animal claw, horn and teeth as a necklace may be the first traditional necklace of Kukis. They still preserve the claws, horn and teeth of the killed wild animals like, eagle, deer, tiger, rhino, elephant, wild boar etc. They used animal claws, horn and teeth for certain reasons. The reasons were for medicinal value, for social recognition of what animals they killed and for its magical power which could prevent the person from evil spirits. A curved and pointed appendage claw of animal like eagle, tiger, and red-deer are attached in necklace. The claw of red-deer has medicinal value to treat an orthopedic patient. The person who killed wild big animals like tiger and wild boar hung the teeth round their neck for recognition.

4.6.2. Headdress

The Kukis used three types of headdress, headgear, crown and turban. The traditional Kuki headgear is used only by women in Christian culture. They call "*Ponlukhuh".* It can be traditional or industrial. According to First Corinthians chapter eleven of the

[52] The Kukis belief, there are some social evils which can cause bad thing to other people. According to their belief, Kaose is human who has some evil-spirit power to do bad practices to other human being, especially to children and weak patients.

Bible, for Christian women, it is very necessary to put-on in the church and at the time of praying.

The Kukis used varied types of crown. The traditional crown of the Kukis is called *"Longchang". Longchang* is threading of a white mollusca shell which is found in beach. Commonly, the shells are threaded in three row and stitche with a desired piece of leather. It is used like a hair band. Among the Kukis, *Longchang* is mostly used by the women of *Mangvung* clan (O. Haokip). Another Kuki traditional crown is made of hornbill feathers. This type of crown is used by both men and women while dancing.

Another headdress of the Kukis is turban traditionally called *"Delkop"* or *"Lukop"*. Both men and women wear this type of headdress. It can be of traditional or industrial cloths. A smaller size of traditional cloths like *Saipikhup, Thangnang and Mongvom* designs are used.

4.6.3. Hand-band

The Kuki traditional hand-band is of two types, bracelet called "Chao" and armlet called "Hah". Chao the Kuki traditional bracelet is made of flat brass.[53] It is in continuous rolled of seven to ten. It is used as a hand-band by womenfolk while dancing. Another hand-band of men folks is called "Hah". Hah is the name of a metal (**Visual 4. 22: Chao, Kuki traditional bangle**The Kuki traditional armlet is made up of this metal brass called Hah. It is mostly worn by the Thadou-Kuki men, when performing traditional dances. It can also be used by women.

4.6.4. Earring

The Kuki traditional earring is of two types, *Bilba* and *Bilkam*. Both Bilba and Bilkam is an ornament of women. It can be of different substance. Brass and copper earring was the most expensive, another earring traditionally made of wood, bamboo and combination of different colour cotton threads.

[53] Department of Art & Culture, Government of Mizoram. Mizoram State Museum-Catalogue. Aizawl: Mizoram State Museum, 2008, p. 49.

4.6.5. Hair-dresses

The Kukis of the past made their own comb from bamboo splits. About three to four inches long and an inch wide, into which are inserted. Only a special craftsman can make this type of comb. Small bamboo splits are bind together with the help of hard wax. The hard waxed makes the handle of a comb. There was no specific traditional hair band of the Kukis. The previously mentioned *Longchang* was a crown and hair-band for women. Another traditional hair-band was simply made from pieces of clothes. Another hair-dress, hair-clip is called *"Samkil". Samkil* is of different types. Some made of bamboo and wood, and the most valuable hair-clip was made of brass with a pointed ended like forceps design.

4.6.6. Garments

The Kukis have different types of traditional garments. The details of all this traditional garments are articulate in another heading. Shawl is one of the most important garment cloths of the Kukis. The shawl of men and women is differing from other. But there is no restriction on wearing. For Kuki women, traditional wrapper is the most important garment. Their traditional wrappers are of different names, types and designs. The Kuki menfolk's are prohibited to touch the wrappers of women. According to their belief, man who touches the women wrappers could not killed or hunted animal. They are also not allowed to pass through under any lower garments of women like wrapper and petticoat exposes in hanger.

One of the common garments for both male and female is muffler. The Kukis used various designs of muffler. The traditional muffler of the Kukis served as multiple purposes in their tradition. There is any restriction in gender basis, but, if the design of a cloth is the lower garments of the women, menfolk's are not allowed to use it. Muffler having the designs of women's under garment serves as chutney for womenfolk's. These muffler types of cloths are also use as headdress and belt by Kuki man and women. Petticoat is another Kuki women's garment as a lower-under garment. Mostly, the traditional petticoat of the Kukis was worn by old women in the society. The traditional petticoat of the Kukis, which they called it *Nihsen* also use in war. During the WW-I & II, where and whenever the Japanese Armies show this *Nihsen,* they divide among themselves in pieces and tied in their hand or head or on their guns

as for bullet-proof. According to their belief 'if a piece of this Nihsen was in their body, bullets could not attacked them and they are saved from bullets in the war. One of the most interesting male garments of the Kukis was waistcoat which they called "Boitong Sangkhol". This is the most important and valuable male shirt of the Kukis. The traditional Kuki waistcoat was white in colour, some have a design of Mongvom and some does not have any design. But, the waistcoats of today's Kukis have different traditional designs with some newly design patterns and styles.

4.6.7. Footwear

The traditional footwear of the Kukis was called Thing-kengkoh (Khurum/khurup). This is a traditional Flip-flop of the Kukis. It is made from a wooden in the base and for the strap they used cloths, leather, rubber etc. which ever the best material available in their locality (Nenghat). There was also footwear called Savun Kengkoh. Savun is animal skin, traditional leather and Kengkoh means footwear. Savun Kengkoh was made from the locally available animal skins of cow, mithun and wild animals.

4.7. MISCELLANEOUS CRAFTS

There were also some traditional crafts of the Kukis which is not mention in the above topics. Traditional craft like Fishing implements, tools, earthen pots and cultural materials used in their daily life are also one of the primary craft of the Kukis.

4.7.1. Earthen Pot

Earthen pots are widely used by the Kukis in the olden days. The Kukis of Myanmar made earthen pots everywhere for holding water and rice-beer (Visual 4. 23: **Earthen pot for Rice beer**but in the Manipur Kukis they produced less earthen pot for their home used only. Nenghat states that, some best earthen pots they used were taken from outside (Nenghat). They use earthen pot for cooking rice, curry, rice beer and storing water. Not only earthen pot, they also used plates and dish bowls made from earthen. Pot for rice beer has four in size:

a. **Hun-bel:** Largest rice beer pot, used only in Hun festivals of the Kukis.
b. **Dangka-bel:** Dangka is one rupee. The rice beer in Dangka-bel is One Rupee.

c. **Makhai-bel:** Makhai means 50 paise. One Makhai-bel of rice beer cost 50 paise.
d. **Siki-bel:** Siki is quater. This is the smallest rice beer pot used by the Kukis.

The village elder from Chandel District of Manipur (U. J. Haokip) states that, "there were no Kuki who made pottery in our locality." Another elder from Chandel District (O. Haokip) talk about that, the Kukis preferred the pots made by the Meiteis of Thongjao for special used. A village elder from Sadar Hills (O. Haokip) mentions that "the Kukis know how to make earthen pot for themselves after the WW-II. Before this, we buy earthen pots of other communities coming from Manung[54]. The Kukis also called earthen pot as "Manung-bel." This means, the pot coming from far and interior place. According to Ngamkhothang from Ukhrul District (N. Haokip), the four rice beer pots are Andro-bel[55], Hun-bel, Dangka-bel, Makhai-bel and Beltung/Siki-bel. About the traditional pot making of the Kukis, (Tuck) mentions that, "Earthen pots are made everywhere for holding water and liquor; the pots are dried in the sun and then baked; pottery is the work of women."

From the above statement, it is known that, in some Kuki areas, pot was not made or good quality of pots was not made by them. In Sadar Hills, the Kukis used pots import from the place they called "Manung". The word Manung means somewhere interior place. The Manung may be the somewhere in Myanmar before the WW-II.

4.7.2. Um

A vessel dry bitter gourd served varied purposes in the traditional Kuki life. The unique traditional musical instrument Goshem is made from gourd. Gourd also used for storing fermented fats, water, twibuh and seeds. They cut the belly portion of the gourd and used it for fetching water like a mug. They dried and preserved a matual bitter gourd for different used.

[54] Manung is a Manipuri dialect which means interior. For the Kukis interior is the place which is far from them. It may be somewhere they do not know or interior from them. If we have a comparison study of the pot used by Chinese/Burmese and the Kukis it was almost the same in design. Therefore, the place where they know as Manung may be not other than Myanmar (Burma).

[55] Andro is the name of the Meitei village, situated 25km from Imphal, the state capital of Manipur. Andro is popular for local wine and earthen pot.

4.7.3. Len (Fishing Net)

The traditional Kuki fishing nets are Lenpi and Lencha. They are capable to make both the fishing net by themselves. The thread they used are collected and produced from the cotton. The thread called Tupat which was produced from a tree fiber was another raw material used for fishing net. The cast or throw fishing net of the Kukis is called Lenpi. The edges are rounded with a weights made of lead. It is thrown by hand so as to spreads out in the water. The other fishing net of the Kukis is push-hand net called 'Lencha'. It is a small fishing net with two stick frame on the sides. The front edges hace weights made of lead. Usually, it is used in shallow waters for taking small fishes and prowns.

4.7.4. Pumjap

Pumjap is the traditional air pump or blower of the Kukis used by blacksmiths. The air blower or forge of the Kuki traditional blacksmith's was made from two hollowed woods standing upright. The pistons are made of bamboo sticks and cock's feathers. Working in hand (Tuck 214) by lifting up-down, one-after-another blows the charcoal furnace. The details of Pumjap portray by N. Haokip (N. Haokip)

> Two big logs about two to three feet length was hollowed it by the used of Paicha (traditional chisel) and Adzes. The two cylindrical logs have a small hole at the bottom.They were join together and make stand straight. Bunds of feather of fowls attached with stick were inserted in the log tube which can go up-and-down. About the mechenary technique, the two sticks were played up-and-down one after another. The air was coming out at the small holes which are in the bottom of the tube.

Pumjap was the property of the chief. Every Kuki village has Pumjap and the blacksmith called Thingkheng. The generic named of the instrument used by the blacksmith is "Thihbu" which was owned by the chief. The blacksmith (Thihkheng) is one of the most important artist/craftsman in the village. U. J. Haokip reveal about the blasksmith that (U. J. Haokip),

> "The blacksmith holds higher post in the village. Blacksmiths' are exempted from tax, village social works and going for war. The best artist/craftsman was selected to do the job in the village year by year. Selection of village blacksmith was done on the village council/assembly day which is called "Khopi Changkut". Chief of the village will arrange the pump for the purpose. The detail description of the

> making of pump is described separately. Once in a year the entire household in the village contribute one day wages each to the chief for Thihbu and the blacksmith for making all the iron implements for the village. On the day of their working in the field, the Chief and the Blacksmith will arrange a mid-day meal to all the workers and a rice beer."

4.7.5. War Equipments

The traditional Kuki war equipments are Tiengcha (spear), Chemjam (sword) and Thalpi (bow). They also producing gun called meipum and gun powder before the First World War. The most powerful and biggest war equipment they used was Pumpi made of animal skin. A combination of Thingkho & Malcha (fire-wood and king Chilli) was the messenger to signify emergency and war. From an around 1890 (may be later), the Chin-Kukis in Burma used gun as a weapon. Before they used gun, they used weapons like bows and arrows, spears and sworts (Tuck) "Sixty years ago (from around 1890s) the weapons of the Chins were bows and arrows, spears and short dao". **Pumpi:** Pumpi is the traditional cannon war weapon of the Kukis. It was made of animal skin. In the last part of the First World War, (M. J. Haokip) Ngulkhup chief of Mombi and men's used this Pumpi against the British. The technique of these animal skin cannon was very typical (N. Haokip).

> "A dry animal skin (especially mithun skin) was dried by seasoning for this weapon. The dried skin was make role-layer in a cylindrical, one side opened and the other side closed with wood and then with the skin itself. A small hole for Meigui was holed it out near the bottom. The role skin was tide-binding with a cane strip. They fired the cannon by burning the Meigui with firewood called Thingkhotong. Length of the Pumpi may be 3-5 feet long. In durability, it was not lasting for long."

a. Meipum

Meipum is the traditional gun of the Kukis. The Kukis used of gun and gun powder since before the First World War. The gun they used is locally known as *Thihnang*. By looking the gun which has a licenses issued by the government, (U. J. Haokip) they can make gun for themselves. The native blacksmiths can make any portion of a flint-lock gun except the barrel (Tuck 214).

According to Bertram S. Carey and HN Tuck, the guns they used are brought through the Burmans and later through Lushai Hills and Burma. They also mention about the

number of surrendered guns and its makes as American, French, and Rusian, German and Italian guns (Tuck 221).

> "Over 4,000 guns have been withdrawn from the Chins since our occupation, the great majority having been surrendered during 1893 and the two following open seasons. All these guns have been brought to the Political Officers, and notes have been kept as to the names of the makers and the dates as engraved or stamped on the locks. American gun, stamped Harpers Ferry or N. Haven and French gun marked St. Etienne, and Russian and German weapons are found, but they are the exception. About 98 per cent of the guns are of English make and 2 per cent made on the Continent and in America… The guns are all flint-locks…"

b. Meilou (gunpowder)

The Kukis also produced gun-powder from their own. The Kukis extracted a chemical for gun powder from urine place at their house. According to (T. Singson), the making of gun powder from urination was discovered by themselves.

> "The Kukis house has a back door for urination. The place of house and its urination was never change. After urinating for more than twenty years at the same place, a chemical which can be used for gun powder was extracted from the earthen which was mix with urine. After cooking for several hours, they got a white substance chemical which they used for making gun powder. The white chemical substance was then mixing with a charcoal made form Khongma-thing or Kollhou-thing in the ratio of 1:2."

For gunpowder, two chemical Nitrite and Sulphur is required. The extraction of a chemical from urine place may be nitrite as the nitrites are used for making an explosive or fertilizer. Whereas the sulphur chemicals are

c. Tiengcha

Tiengcha is the traditional spear of the Kukis. They used bamboo or wooden sticks as Tiengcha, where there was no spear made of mettal. After they have the knowledge of using iron tools, (T. Singson) they themselves make tiengcha in two types of design, Tiengka and Tieng. Tiengka is the spear having arrow design of spear-hear, and Tieng is triangle shape with sharped and pointed head. One side of the Tiengcha was always hace un-pointed bottom in simply plain.

d. Chemjam

Chemjam, the traditional Kuki Sword is also war equipment used by the Kukis since time immemorial. It has no specific design and size. It was made by the village blacksmith (T. Singson).

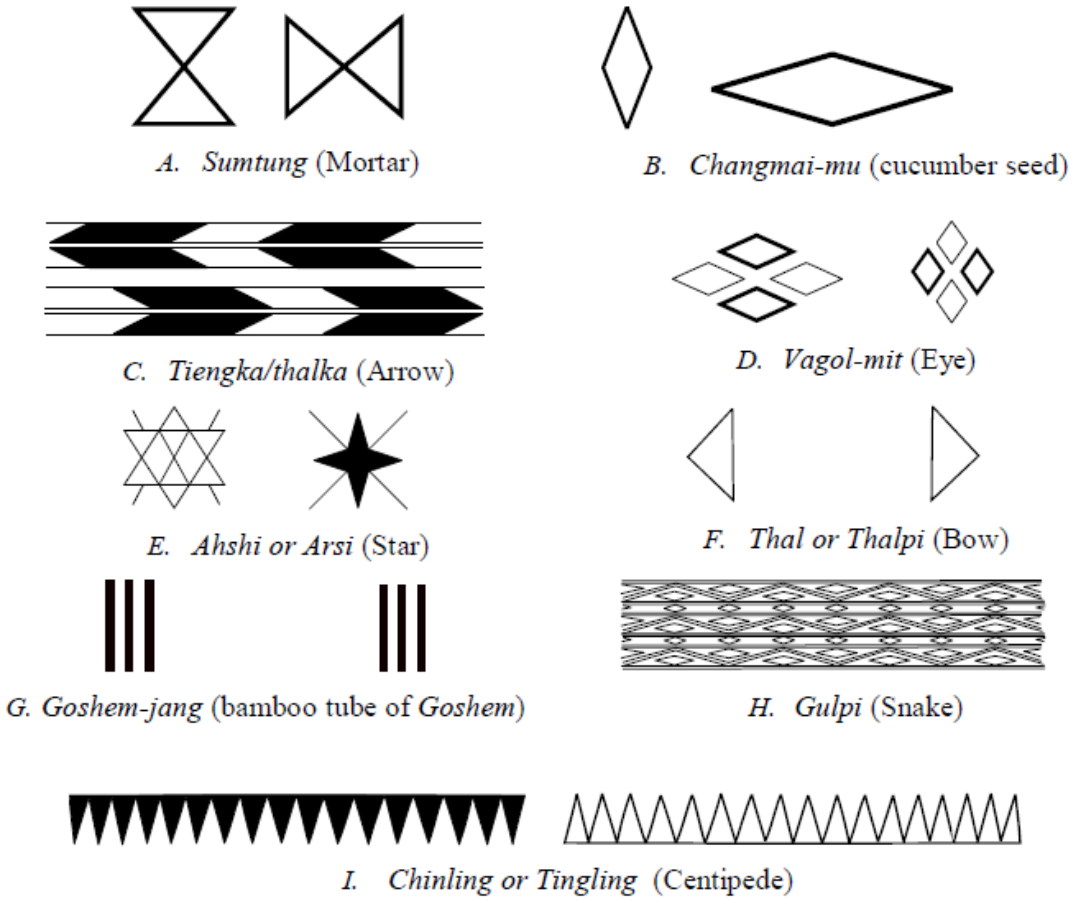
e. Thalpi

, the arrow which has *Ti-tonggu* was kept separately special."

f. Lum

The traditional Kuki shield is called Lum. Lum was used to defend or protect the attacked of spear, knife, arrow and even the bullet. It was made from dried animal skins. Animal skins like (O. Haokip) Buffalow and Mithun was highly preferred because of its thickness. The dried animal skin was cut according to the sizes of persons bellow nect to the waist for protection of the front and back.

4.8. NORMS & RESTRICTIONS



Visual 4. 1: Symbols use in Kuki traditional clothes

Visual 4. 2: A Kuki woman in traditional weaving of cloth

Visual 4. 3: Kuki woman weaving of *Saipikhup* by Fly Shutter Loom

Visual 4. 4: Original Khamtang (Kuki Traditional Wrapper) of Koms

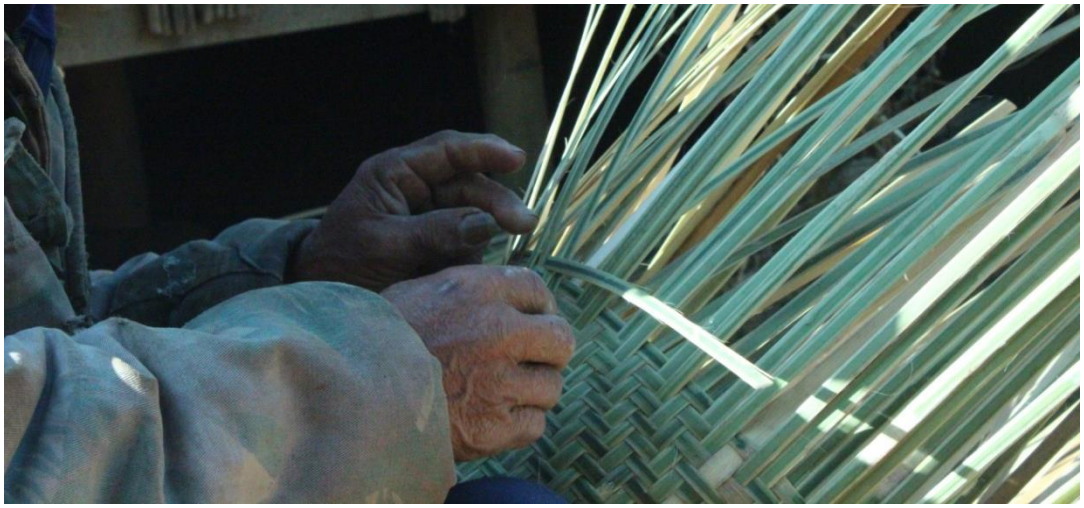
Visual 4. 5: *Numei Saipikhup* (Thadou)

Visual 4. 6: Pasal Saipikhup (Thadou)

Visual 4. 7: *Thangnang*, Kuki traditional shawl

Visual 4. 8: Prepation of bamboo splits for craft

Visual 4. 9: Craftman with different Kuki traditional carrying basket



Visual 4. 10: Craft of Kuki traditional carrying basket Longkai by Pu Shokhai (Craftman)

Visual 4. 11: Sinkhup, basket for storing valuable items

Visual 4. 12: Paipeh, basket for carrying small grains in the field (Arts)

Visual 4. 13: Thul/Lelpi, Kuki traditional basket for storing valuable items

Visual 4. 14: *Namkol*, Kuki traditional wooden strap (Unknown, Namkol)

Visual 4. 15: Making of Goshem, the Kuki traditional musical instrument

Visual 4. 16: Goshem (Kuki traditional musical instrument), Made by Pu Ngamlhun Lhungdim

Visual 4. 17: Gong, traditional musical instrument

Visual 4. 18: Kuki traditional Drum set (Unknown)

Visual 4. 19: *Chotlep*, Kuki traditional mortar for husking rice

Visual 4. 20: Thingkong (traditional wooden tub)

Visual 4. 21: Kuki traditional stires for cultural dance

Visual 4. 22: Chao, Kuki traditional bangle

Visual 4. 23: Earthen pot for Rice beer