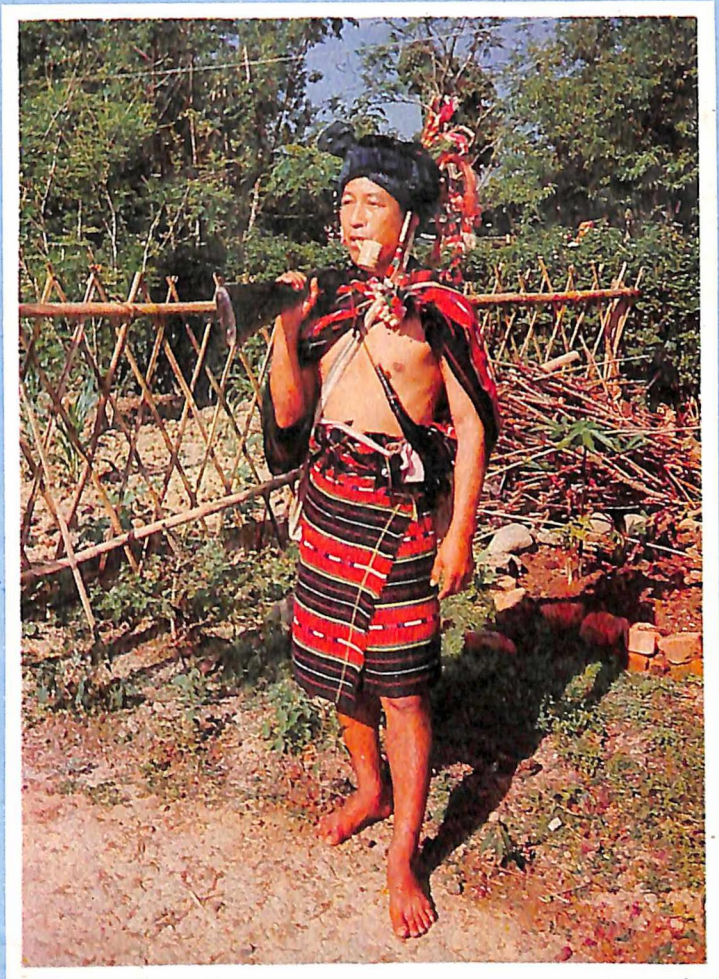


# THE HMARS OF MANIPUR

An Anthropological Exploration



V.P. SHARMA

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# THE HMARS OF MANIPUR

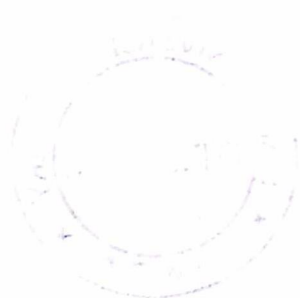
## AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL EXPLORATION



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ANMOL PUBLICATIONS

ANMOL PUBLICATIONS  
4378/4B, Ansari Road  
Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002



*The Hmars of Manipur*  
© 1992, Author  
ISBN 81-7041-631-0

Call No. 301-5416  
Acc. No. 7932

**PRINTED IN INDIA**

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Published by J.L. Kumar for Anmol Publications, New Delhi and  
Printed at A.P. Offset, Naveen Shahdara, Delhi-110032.



## FOREWORD

This study seeks to explore the socio-political aspects of the life and culture of Hmar a little known tribe of Manipur and Mizoram. In addition to this the author has given an insightful account of the dances and musical instruments of the community, weaving, basketry techniques and the decorative arts have also received his attention. The value of the study has been enhanced by the numerous diagrams and photographs detailing various artifacts and activities of the community.

It is commendable that this study has been made by a scholar from Bihar. Having worked on Bihar tribal communities for so long anthropologists from Bihar must enlarge their field of studies. This will provide comparative insights which will in turn, prove useful for anthropological analysis. However, the comparative material should be deep and penetrating to make the analysis fruitful. The centre for Himalayan studies in the Department of Anthropology, Ranchi University can play a major role in providing opportunities for such studies.

**Sachchidananda**

U.G.C. Emeritus Fellow

Former Vice-Chancellor

Ranchi University



## PREFACE

The essential aim of all scientific discipline is TATVA DARSANAM i.e. the knowledge of reality. One should have a personal insight into reality. This is the basis of anthropological researches. In the vedic hymn warning has been given that before reaching to any kind of conclusion one should not take anything on trust but to examine everything. For this examination, anthropologists have used and are using field work method. It is undoubtedly a response to the call given by TAITTIRIYA UPANISAD to find out what the ultimate reality is. Anthropological field enquiry specially observation (participant) virtually a TAPAS — the research method. Panini tells us TAPAS is reflection, ALOCHNA. An anthropologist looking at his micro world of enquiry, trying to find out what is the reality? What are the social organisations? What principle guides a particular society? What are the inter-personal relations which binds individuals with each other? What is aesthetic in a culture?

The present work, embracing Social Organisation, Youth Organisation, Political Organisation, Forest and Economy in part one and performing and decorative arts of Hmar in part two is placed before the Social Scientists and interested readers. The fervent hope of mine is that it will add some thing real about the Hmars of Manipur to their knowledge. If this is achieved, I will feel satisfied.

I worked in the field with the notion of RIGVEDA “AA NO BHADRAH KRATVO YANTU VISWATAH”— i.e. let noble thoughts come from every corner. And it really worked. The people of Hmar Society were so kind, so generous in providing information, I needed. Therefore, I

am indeed indebted to all of them. My special thanks are due to Mr. R. Tawna Riengsete and his wife Rose Maylie, who provided me shelter and food during my field work. Their two kids Gladys and Grace kept me busy saving me from melancholy.

My thanks are also due to Dr. Laldena, Mr. H.K. Khawlkung, Mr. Lala Khobung of Churachandpur.

Professor T.N. Pandey, University of California and Professor B.N. Saraswati of NEHU guided and encouraged me to conduct present enquiry. I pay my reverence to them. My regards are due to Professor R.N. Gaur, Department of English, who made useful corrections in the manuscript.

The mind behind persuading me to take up this work, is none else than Professor A.B. Saran, Director, Centre of Advanced Study, to whom I owe, a great debt.

The inspiring man behind the successful completion of this work is Professor Bhawani Mohan Mukherjee, whose debt I wish to carry with me to the other world.

For analysis and format the author is indebted to Professor V.S. Upadhyay and Dr. A.K. Haldar. My heartfelt thanks are due to Mr. Rajendra Dutta Mishra of my department. I thank everybody, who helped me through thick and thin.

**V.P. Sharma**

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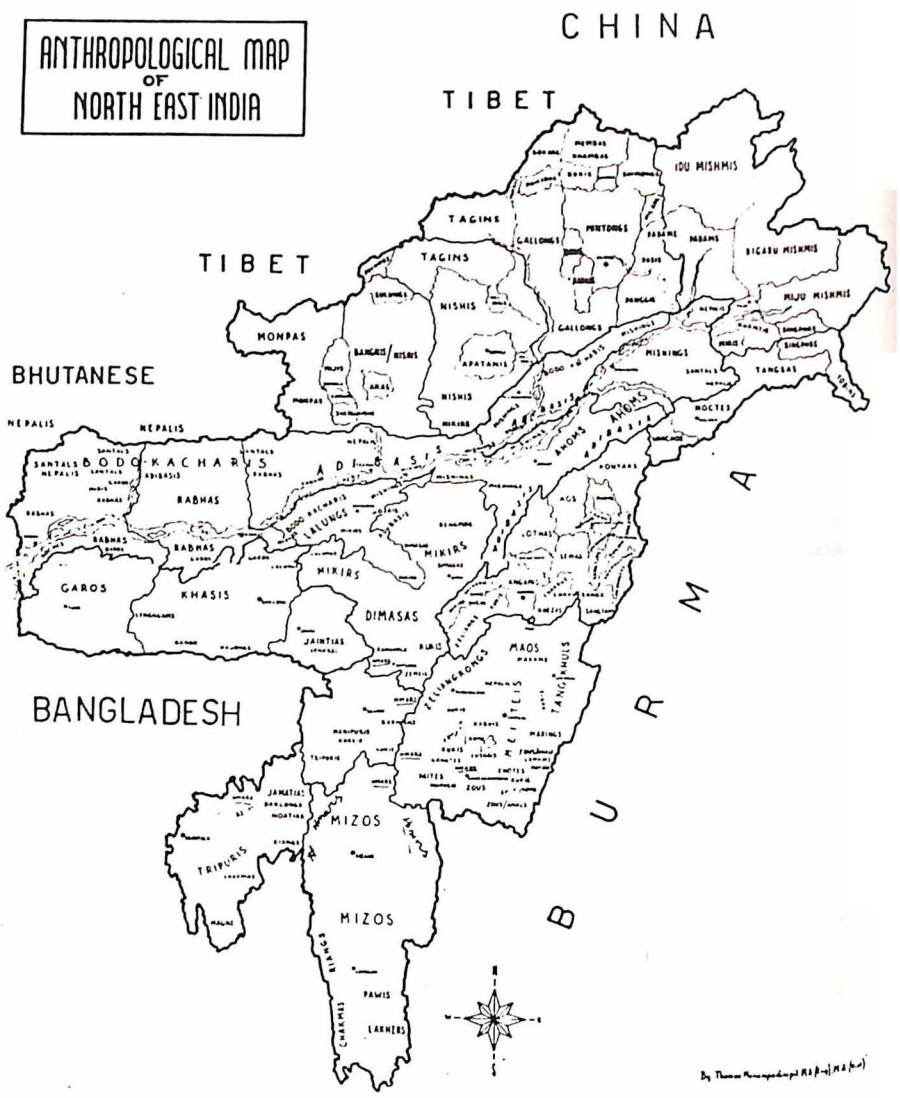
## INTRODUCTION

Manipur has always been singled out as an area with a tremendous art potential. The rich tradition of hand-made art and textiles are rooted in the ancient past and its originality was developed under conditions of widely spread cultural contact. The people of the area, not only preserved the traditions of their ancestors, through out the course of time but have created some new forms too. The hilly tracts of Burma and Assam offered a line for establishing communications between India and China. The association between India and China goes far into the remote past. The present population of Hmar Chin group of tribal at Manipur, who migrated from 'Sinlun' of China are the living examples. In pre-Bhudhist period Chinese influence was already well established in India.

Manipur, the 19th state of the Indian Union, lies within the hillramparts demarcating the boundary line between India and Burma. It is the north-eastern part of India, surrounded by Burma on the east, Assam on the west, Nagaland on the north and Mizoram and Chin hills of Burma on the south. It is situated between latitude 23 degree 50' and 25 degree 41' North, and longitude 93 degree 2' and 94 degree 47' East. It has an area of 22,489.0 sq. kms. inhabited by 14,20,953 people as per 1981 census of India report. The valley has the concentration of about two-third of the population and the remaining one-third inhabit the hills. The density of population in hills is 25 person per sq. kms. The average density of population per sq. kms. is only 64 as against all India average of 221.

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ANTHROPOLOGICAL MAP  
OF  
NORTH EAST INDIA



By Thomas Munro and Prof. R. S. Sengupta

S. ROKUNG SONGATE

Meitei and Muslims constitute the majority, i.e., two-third of state's population inhabiting the ten percent of total geographical area 4,40,057 of the State. The tribal population constitutes 31.18 per cent inhabiting the hill districts which forms 9/10th of the total area of the State (Census 1981). (See table 1).

Table—I  
TRIBAL POPULATION IN MANIPUR

Sl. Name of tribe No.	Population	
	1971	1981
1. Aimol	836	1100
2. Anal	6670	8770
3. Angami	70	82
4. Any Mizo (Lushai Tribes)	7483	9845
5. Chiru	2785	3664
6. Chothe	1905	2507
7. Gangte	6307	8298
8. Hmar	23312	30672
9. Kabui i. Puinei & ii. Rongmei	40257	52966
10. Kacha Naga i. Zemei & ii. Liengmei	13026	17138
11. Koirao	1620	2132
12. Koirang	458	603
13. Kom	6550	8618
14. Lamgang	2622	3450
15. Maram	4539	5972
16. Maring	9825	12927
17. Mao	33379	43917
18. Monsang	930	1224
19. Mayon	1360	1989
20. Paite	24755	32570
21. Purum	N.A.	N.A.
22. Ralte	154	203



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23. Sema	3	5
24. Sukte	3	5
25. Simte	4177	5476
26. Tangkhul	57851	76115
27. Thadou	59955	78883
28. Vaiphei	12347	16245
29. Zou	10060	13235

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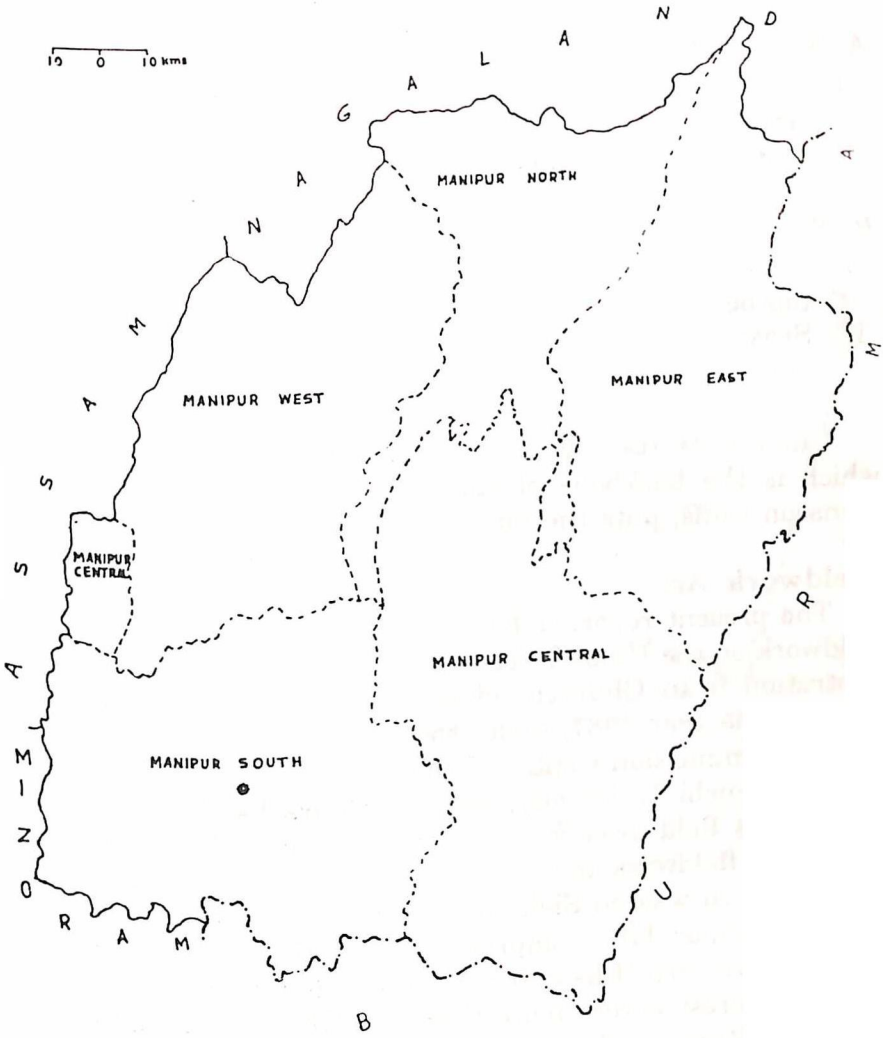
### **Climate**

Manipur enjoys a subtropical monsoon climate that varies in different geographical regions. The extent and the arrangement of the hills, their elevations and the facings of their slope provides an 'optimum climate', the feature unknown in the rest of India. Topographical varieties within a short distance results in rapid climatic changes. The Barak Basin and the lower foot hills of the Manipur Eastern hills, bordering Burma, have a warmer climate than the central valley and the surrounding hills. Similarly, the western part of the state is more moist than the eastern because of it's location on the windward slopes of the hills. The State is almost dry in cold and hot weather season. Manipur attracts the moist monsoon winds from the neighbouring seas for a pretty long season of general rains.

### **Temperature**

The mean annual temperature records a decreasing trend towards the east. The temperature of Jiribam registers 23.6 degree C, Thanlon and Churachandpur record 21.3 degree C and 21.7 degree C respectively. Tengnoupal receives the lowest only 18.8 degree C. January is the coldest month, when the mean monthly temperature varies from 11.8 degree C to 19.4 degree C. In July, the hottest month, the average monthly temperature ranges between 5.1 degree C and 31.1 degree C. Here the winters are not very cold and summers are not very hot.

# MANIPUR



### **Rainfall**

The Rainfall is relatively abundant and wide spread. It varies from a maximum of 258.9 cms. at Jiribam to only 97 cm. at Wangball. Seasonal pattern of weather as per groupings of Government of India's Metrological departments is :

*A) Season of north-east monsoon*

- i. Cold weather of winter season (December to February)
- ii. Hot weather of summer season (March to April).

*B) Season of south-west monsoon*

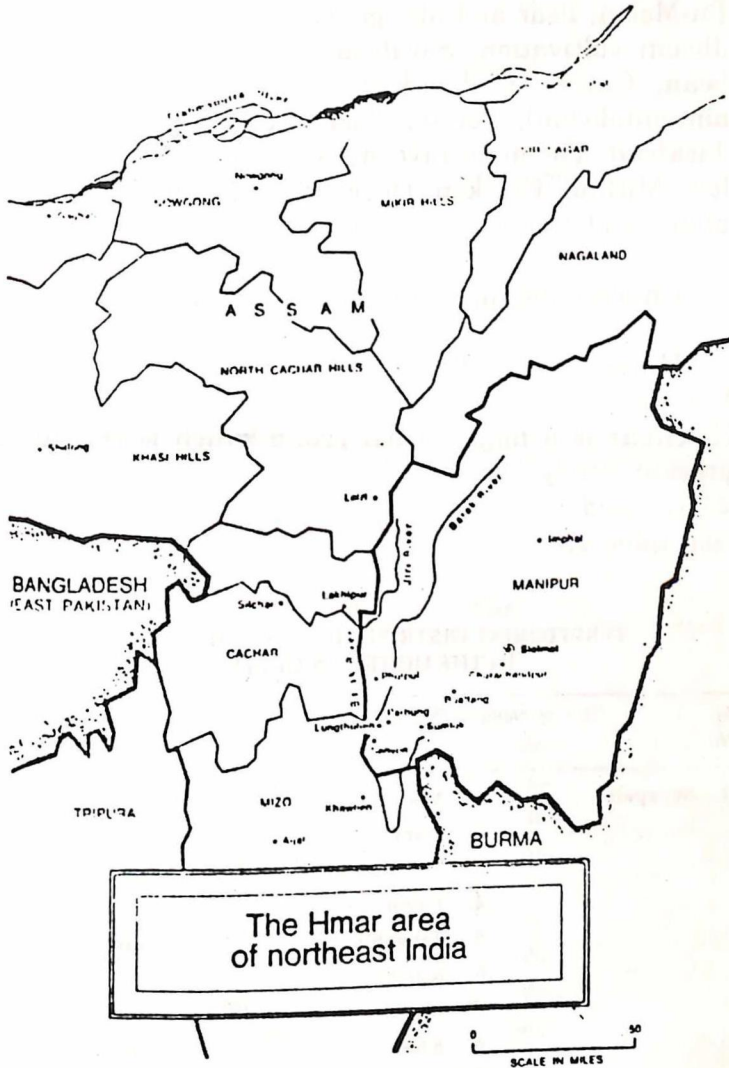
- i. Season of general rains or rainy season (May to September)
- ii. Season of retreating monsoon (October to November).

Climate exerts a great influence on the agriculture, which is the backbone of state economy. The failure of monsoon rains, puts the farmers in a hazardous position.

### **Fieldwork Area**

The present report is based on the author's intensive fieldwork on the Hmar Tribe of Manipur, whose large concentration is in Churachandpur of Manipur South District. In the year 1987, under the aegis of the University Grants Commission Centre of advanced study in Anthropology, Ranchi University, Ranchi, Churachandpur was selected as field area for the present study. The author conducted fieldwork in six villages cluster but the major concentration was on Sielmutt village of Churachandpur. Churachandpur hills comprises the Southern section of Manipur Western Hills and coincides with Manipur South District. Forest covers more than four-fifths of the area, but the cultural landscape is dominated by agriculture in which 87% of the people are engaged. The tribal people use hills as well as plains for cultivation. In plains they grow paddy, Maize, Soya Beans, Beans, Rice bean, French bean,





Cow Pea, Green Chilli, Rape-mustard, Leafy mustard, Bitter Gouard, Snake Gouard, Pumpkin, Pine apple, Lemon, Pu-Melon, Pear and Mango. On hills they grow paddy by Jhoom cultivation, Soyabean, Beans, Rice-bean, French bean, Ginger, Chilli (Red Paper), Oil Seed crop (sesamumindicum), Potato, Turmeric, Orange, Banana and Jackfruit. The main Live stock comprises Cow, Pig, Buffalo, Mithun, Chicken, Duck, Pigeon, Cat, Dog, Fish, Elephant and Horse.

Churachandpur is inhabited by the following tribes.

Hmar, Paite, Thadao, Anal, Chothe, Kabui, Kom, Vaiphei, Zou, Mizo, Gangte, Simte, Ralte, Sukte (see Table II) Hmar is a major tribal group which is the subject of present study. As per 1971 census their number was 23,312 and in 1981 their population increased to 30,672 (see table I).

Table—II  
TERRITORIAL DISTRIBUTION OF SCHEDULED TRIBE  
IN THE DISTRICTS OF MANIPUR

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Name of District</i>	<i>Name of Communities</i>
1. Senapati	1. Mao	(Major group)
	2. Maram	-do-
	3. Thadou Kuki	-do-
	4. Kabui	(Minor group)
	5. Tangkhul	-do-
	6. Maring	-do-
	7. Chiru	-do-
	8. Kom	-do-
	9. Voireng	-do-
	10. Vaiphei	-do-
	11. Kacha Naga	-do-
	12. Sema	-do-
	13. Keirao	-do-

- |                                  |   |               |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------|
| 2. Tamenglong                    | 1. Kabui  | (Major group) |
|                                  | 2. Thadou   | (Minor group) |
|                                  | 3. Gangte   | -do-          |
| 3. Churachandpur                 | 1. Hmar   | (Major group) |
|                                  | 2. Paite  | -do-          |
|                                  | 3. Thadou   | -do-          |
|                                  | 4. Anal   | (Minor group) |
|                                  | 5. Chothe   | -do-          |
|                                  | 6. Kabui  | -do-          |
|                                  | 7. Kom  | -do-          |
|                                  | 8. Vaiphei  | -do-          |
|                                  | 9. Zou  | -do-          |
|                                  | 10. Mizo  | -do-          |
|                                  | 11. Gangte  | -do-          |
|                                  | 12. Simte   | -do-          |
|                                  | 13. Ralte   | -do-          |
|                                  | 14. Sukte   | -do-          |
| 4. Tengnoupal                    | 1. Anal   | (Major group) |
|                                  | 2. Maring   | -do-          |
|                                  | 3. Thadou   | -do-          |
|                                  | 4. Lamgang  | (Minor group) |
|                                  | 5. Zou  | -do-          |
|                                  | 6. Gangte   | -do-          |
|                                  | 7. Mayon  | -do-          |
|                                  | 8. Monsang  | -do-          |
|                                  | 9. Aimol  | -do-          |
|                                  | 10. Chothe  | -do-          |
|                                  | 11. Purum   | -do-          |
|                                  | 12. Mizo  | -do-          |
|                                  | 13. Tangkhul  | -do-          |
|                                  | 14. Kom   | -do-          |
| 5. Imphal, Bishnupur,<br>Thoubal | 1. Kabui  | (Major group) |
|                                  | 2. Representatives of most of<br>the tribes are found in<br>small number. |               |

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6. Ukhrul	1. Tangkhul	(Major group)
	2. Thadou	(Minor group)

---

Table—III  
KUKI DIVISION ON THE BASIS OF ARRIVAL

<i>Old Kuki</i>	<i>New Kuki</i>
Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Kairao, Koireng, Kom, Lamgang, Paite, Purum, Simte, Vaiphei, Zou, Hmar.	Thadous (and their other kin groups, such as, Doungel, Misao, Lumpheng, Lumpho, Ngeilu, Lamhao, Thangeo, Touthang, etc. Which are not mentioned in the list of recognised tribes).

---

## THE HMAR-IDENTITY AND DISTRIBUTION

The largest concentration of Hmar tribe is found today in Churachandpur, Tipaimukh and Jiribam subdivisions of Manipur. A good number of Hmar are also found in north Cachar hills (Assam), Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura. Though Hmar are scattered here and there they still maintain their common customs and culture as well as their own dialect which has close affinity to the Lusai and invariably resembles Paite and Kuki dialect.

The earlier writers, both British and Indian have confused their identity by putting them under Lusai or Kuki tribes. J. Shakespear used the term *Kuki* and *Khawthlang* interchangeably to mean Hmar. He also included some of the Hmar clans like *Khawlthring*, *Ngeute* etc. under the term Lusai (Shakespear 1912). Not only Shakespear but also William Shaw (1929), W.Mc. Chuloch (1959); T.C. Hudson (1911) and D.N. Mazumdar (1944) have used the term Kuki and have listed different ethnic populations under it. This has created a great confusion for present day social scientist. According to Grierson and C.A. Soppit "both the names Kuki and Chin have been given to them by their neighbours. The word "Kuki" is an Assamese or Bengali term applied to various hill tribes such as Lusais, Rangkhols, Thadaus etc. In the Rajmala, Shiva is stated to have fallen in love with a Kuki woman, and the Kuki are mentioned in connection with the Tiperrah Raja Chchang who flourished about 1512 A.D. (Grierson 1967 1-2; Sop-



pit 1887). J.W. Edgar, a civil officer, who accompanied the British forces to Tipaimukh on April 3, 1872, wrote about the Hmars, "Thus, the name Kookie has been given to the tribe by the Bengalis and is not recognised by the hillmen themselves and I have never found any trace of a common name for the tribe among them, although they too consider different families as belonging to a single group, which is certainly coextensive with that we call *Kooki* tribe." Whatever may be the truth, the term *Kuki* was first used by Bengalis and Assamese and later by the British to identify the hill tribes. It never received wide acceptance among them and this is particularly so in the case of the Hmars (Laldena 1987). It is only A.C. Bhagabati who has referred to Hmar as a smaller tribe while referring to the identity of Mizo he says, "The Mizo as an ethnic entity has emerged out with the Lusai as the core element with whom other relatively smaller tribes, such as the Ralte and the Hmar, formed one category. Outside the State of Mizoram these groups are to be found mainly in Manipur and Tripura (Bhagabati 1988, 14-15).

All the above mentioned controversies and categorisation of the Hmar tribe under Kuki and Lusai have been set aside by the Government of India and the Hmars of Manipur have been included in the list of Scheduled tribes as an independent identity at Manipur. Out of the 29 Scheduled tribes of Manipur as recognised by the Government of India the Hmar shares the larger part.

*Origin & Migration:* Local tradition maintains that there were two brothers the elder, because of a sore on the nape of his neck, tied his hair in a knot on his forehead and was called *Hrum sawm*, and the younger tied his hair in a knot at the back of his head and was called *Tukbemsawam*, a synonymous word for Hmar. It is, therefore, quite possible that the word Hmar originated from the word Hmarh and all the decedents of *Tukbemsawam* are now known as Hmar.

For the origin of the Hmar one has to look to their traditional folk songs. The tradition and belief of the people point to the *Sinlun* as their traditional home. The exact location of *sinlun* is a moot question. A Hmar historian, Hranglien Songate, understands it to be the present Tailung or Sinlung in south-west China. Speculations have also been made that this *sinlung* might have been shining some where in Central China. The Hmar remembers *Sinlun* as a city State. (Pudaite 1965, 21-22) some Hmars believed that this might have been the name of a cave from where they along with Lusais came out. But where was the cave and where could it be located and identified? B.K. Roy Burman (1970) identifies it with the present *Sinlung* in Central China which bordered the Shan State. The fact that the Hmars settled in Shan state for several decades seems to point to this conclusion. After *Sinlun* the first settlement of the Hmar people was in the present Shan state of Burma. Of their stay in Shan, Hranglien Songate writes—

“In Shan, their civilization advanced much further than *Sinlung*, and the people showed greater intelligence. They knew how to celebrate agricultural prosperity, learned better art of war, and made festival of their victory over the enemy. Further more, they learned the use of iron implements and moulding of pipes (out of brass). The first man associated with iron work Mawni and Sozam, moulding of pipe was started by Tamlopa”. Many of their great festivals were connected with their Shan State civilization. *Khunglawan* (Spring festival), *Lunglak* (autumn Festival), *Sesun* (Solemn) celebrations are all connected with Shan” (Pudaite 1963, 25).

After the Shan settlement, the date of their migration became a bit clear. Both the Burmese and the local tradition fix the date of their migration in Shan State before 1400 A.D. and the date of their next settlement in *Kawlphai* between 1400 to 1700 A.D.

Some of the Hmar clans, particularly, Hrangehali, Faihriens, Biete, Chansang, Parngawan, Ngurte, Khawlbung, Khawdawn, Thieck, zote etc. ultimately settled in Champai of the present Mizoram. The place where the Hmar settled are known today by these clan's names. It is believed that this Ist large scale migration perhaps took place in between 1526-1700 A.D. For want of more fertile lands, the Hmar in Mizoram were scattered; some moved as far as north Cachar hill in 1780 according to J. Shakespeare. Some to Tripura and the largest number to south-west Manipur. Though there was large scale settlement in Manipur, perhaps because of cultural and geographical reasons, the people did not come directly under the control of Maharaja Gambhir Singh of Manipur. It is only the treaty of 1833 between the Maharaja and the British which brought the Hmar east of Jiri river and west of Barak river under the control of Maharaja.



## SOCIAL ORGANISATION

### Hmar Clans

There are as many as 24 different clans found among Hmar of Manipur. Some of the clans are represented by a few members, where as others by big groups. Each of these clans is divided into sub-clans. Each of these clans resides in a particular area or village and many of the villages are named after the name of the clan occupying it. Clanship among them does not regulate their marriage rules. An individual can select his mate from any clan including his own. There is no rule prohibiting clan endogamy of exogamy. The 24 clans found among Hmars are *Ngurte Khawbung, Lawtlang, Zote, Thiek, Lungtau, Hrangate, Dargawn, Pakhuong, Faihriem, Leiri, Chawrthei, Vangsie, Khuolhring (Khawlhiring) Khiengte, Biete, Pautu, Rawite, Chawthe, Hrangkhawk, Chawrai, Hmar Lusei, Darlong and Sakum.*

These clans are further divided into 180 sub-clans/families as shown in the chart. The Zote clan have the largest sub group numbering as many as 14 and SAKUM clan is without any subclan.

1. *Ngurte* clan has subclans like — Sanate, Pavate, Saingur, Bangran, Taite and Chiluo. The Sanate are further divided into two more groups : Pusingathla and Saidangathla.
2. *Khawbung* is divided into seven subclans which are Fente, Pangamte, Pazamte, Riengsete, Bunglung, Laising and Funte. The last subclan Funte is further

- divided into two groups Siertthlang and Siersak.
3. *Lawitang* claims six subclans that are Hrangchal, Sungte, Varte, Suomte, Tlawmte, and Chawnsim. Hrangchal is again divided into four groups e.g. Laiasung, Sielasung, Darasung and Tungte.
  4. *Zote* comprises as many as Thirteen subclans like Pusiete, Chuongkhup, Saiate (Saih mang), Chawngtuol, Darkhawlai, Tlangte, Parate, Hrang sote, Ngaiate.
  5. *Thiek* have fifteen subclans such as Athu, Amaw, Tuolor, Buhriil, Hekte, Thinchung, Kungete, Selate, Tuolte, Hnamte, Taite, Kangbur, Khawzawl, Vankal and Pakhunate. The Tuolour subclan have one more subsection called Thilsong. Hekte have two subsections Ralsum and Chonghekte. Khawlzawl have 3 subdivisions Lalum, Laldan and Saibung. The Vankal are further divided into three more subdivisions Pangote, Pangulte and Khawbuol. The Pakhunate have two divisions — Khumthuv and Khumsen.
  6. *Lungtau* clan is further divided into fourteen subclans they are :  
Mihiriemate, Songate, Infimate, Nungate, Intoate, Pasulate, Keivom, Tamhrang, Sielhnam, Theisiekate Sunate, Thlawngate, Longchong and Inbuon.
  7. *Hrangate* have one clan by the same name Hrangate and the other three are Hrang sote, Hrangolo and Hrangmanas subclans.
  8. *Darngawn* have two subclans Ruolngul and Paiheng Banzang which is further divided into five divisions as Chawaghmunte, Famhawite, Sinate, Lamchangte and Fatlei.
  9. *Pakhuong* have four subclans as — Khuongpui, Buongpui, Hranngul and Khelte.
  10. *Faihriem* have altogether 13 subclans. They are Saivate, Tuollai, Bapui, Tuimuol, Khawlum, Khawkhieng, Khawreng, Sekong, Seiling, Thlanghnung, Salhmar, F. Tusing and Dulien.
  11. *Leiri* is further divided into six subclans such as — Neingaite, Puruolte, Pudaite, Pulamte, Puhnuongte and Thandar.



12. *Chawnthei* have four divisions — they are Neichir, Luophuol, Hnechong and Lamthik.
13. *Vangsie* this also have six subclans. They are Invang, Vanghau, Dosil, Tlukte, Theiduah and Zapte.
14. *Khuolhring/Khawhling* — This has 10 subdivisions as Chunthang, Lung-en, Lozun, Leibir, Midang, Milai, Pielel, Rawlsim, Thlaute and Suokling.
15. *Khiengte* have seven subgroups, Khupthang, Khup-sung, Kumsung, Khello, Muolvum, Singbel and Chawungte.
16. *Biete* is some times referred a subclan under Darlong but it has also a separate identity with one subgroup Fatlei.
17. *Pautu* have only two subdivisions i.e. Singate and Tluongate.
18. *Rawite* have 8 subsections. They are Pieltu, Sawrte, Buite, Arru, Zate, Aite, Hnungte and Seldo.
19. *Chawthe* — This have 10 subclans, Changfieng, Chawngdang, Chawnthick, Chamte, Hawnzawng, Lienhna, Halte, Thamau, Tamva and Suonhawi.
20. *Hrangkhawl/Hrangate* have four subclans, Hrang-gate, Hrangso, Hrangdo and Hrangman.
21. *Chawrai* have four subclans. They are Langkai, Sathnuoi, Thipai and Nisatrai.
22. *Hmarlusei* — Langraug Pang, Muolthuom, Kaipeng, Baung are included in this.
23. *Darlong* have six subclans :
  - (a) Thiet with its four division like Vankal, Khangbur, Hnamate and Hmante.
  - (b) Faihriem — three subdivisions like Saihriem, Khawhreng and Saihmar.
  - (c) Hrangchal with two divisions Khuothu and Lawmte.
  - (d) Ngurte — with one subgroup Rante.
  - (e) Beite — with Fatlei,
  - (f) Sorgate.
24. *Sakum* — some more subclans have been categorised under this clan who also are found in Other Chin group of tribes which could not be verified.

## Marriage

Marriage among Hmar is not restricted to any particular clan, tribe or community. They do not practice any strict norm of exogamy or endogamy. Marriage usually takes place between two persons (male and female) who are normally not related to each other for three ascending generations. In older generation people, village endogamy was followed and in the new generation marriages are generally encouraged outside the village. Hmar usually marry late. The age of marriage for boys is 22 to 31 years and 18 to 27 years for girls. Marriage takes place mostly in winter i.e. from October to March, when they are free from agricultural activities. September is a tabooed month for marriage. It is locally called Thlaramthla i.e. the month of destruction. As per their traditional belief which is reflected in their folk songs this is the month when the ancient Hmar settlement was destroyed by devastating rain.

One's maternal cross-cousin is a preferred spouse. It is quite legitimate to marry first cousin from maternal side. The boy marrying a maternal cross-cousin called PUITINNEI, is considered lucky and will get fowls in abundance. Marriage are decided by parents. Marriages are negotiated by the boy's side through a messenger (Palai). When a young man wishes to marry, his mother sends her messenger who approaches the girl's parents and invite them for drink of rice beer 'ZU'. Acceptance or rejection of invitation by the girl's parent symbolises the acceptance or otherwise of proposal. The messenger bears with him a 'Hmar-am' i.e. a cloth, a Thirdam i.e. a hoe and a pot of ZU (rice beer) which he leaves behind at bride's place as a symbol of the pleasant home. During the drinks session, the other negotiations e.g. bride price etc. are finalized. The bride-price is always in Mithuns ranging from 3 to 7. Price varies according to the clan of the bride. The girl from the Chief's clan always fetches high price. This price is always paid in easy instalments of 20 years. Ist instalment is paid on the wedding day. There is a very



interesting distribution of the bride price among the family members of the bride which reflects healthy family relations. The bride price is divided into three parts (a) Manpui, (b) Mansiper and (c) Pusum.

- (a) Manpui is paid to the bride's father, who keeps the larger part, and smaller parts are distributed among the male members of the clan.
- (b) Mansiper is divided under three heads
  - (i) Panghak which is distributed among the friends (Zawls) of bride's father.
  - (ii) Nisum — This is exclusively bride's paternal aunt's share. After receiving this share the aunt will prepare curry and fowl and will invite the newly wed couple at dinner.
  - (iii) Sangdon — This share is distributed among the younger sisters of the bride.
- (c) Pusum : Pusum is paid to the bride's mother's father. After getting the Pusum the man will give a feast of pig to the bride and give her Sadar i.e. full leg upto shoulder of a pig as gift.

When the 1st instalment of the bride price is paid and distributed as described earlier then a marriage feast is organised at bride's home; at the expense of the groom's family. This is a fabulous feast organised by killing Mithuns, cows and pigs for the preparation of dishes. When the feast is over, the friends (zawl) of groom will escort the bride to the groom's home, where the real wedding ceremony solemnizes.

There is a unique practice of elopement of bride in between marriage fixation and marriage ceremony which is also an accepted norm called Sumhruisatan. Under this a girl can be eloped by any boy, before marriage and marriage dissolves. The boy, causing this dissolution has to pay a price which is pig to the groom's family. Third boy can also elope with the girl in the same fashion. If a boy has

eloped with the girl under Sumhruisatan then he must marry the girl otherwise he will be executed with a fine of sekhat i.e. Rs. 40/- by the village elders and the amount of fine will go to the girl's family. Since matrimonial bond is loose, divorce is not a problem. A girl seeking divorce simply has to persuade her parents to agree to refund the bride price they have received. This is called Suminsuo. In case the boy seeking divorce gives sekhat i.e. Rs. 40/- to the girl, he takes her to her parents house. This payment by boy is called Makman. If the two have separated by mutual agreement and wish to remarry, they can do so. In that case the boy making advances, has to make up the overdues of his payment. However, if the woman makes advances for the remarriage, the boy has nothing to pay.

In Hmar society, there is no law or custom preventing widow marriage, therefore, a widow often remarries.

### **Family**

In the social fabric of any society or community the family is the nucleus and this is also true of the Hmar of Manipur. The traditional Hmar family is of the patriarchal type. The father is the head of family and his decisions are regarded as final in all matters. Children look upon their parents with great respect and do not call them by name. The composition of family consists of a husband, his wife, their married or unmarried children. In this way they constitute a Joint family system. The peculiarity of it lies in some very healthy practice of joint family as considered by them i.e. when the son is married he brings his wife into his father's house. The bride is thoroughly trained in the family traditions and practices. The couple stay there for a long time till they have several children of their own. Then the Hmar have a custom for this new couple moving away from home and establishing their own house only when their children become of marriageable age. Their new home is built jointly by the entire family and they are properly sent off. This practice makes the child



learn intricacies of life and family administration from an experienced head of the family i.e. his father. He learns to share, to play, to co-operate and to prepare himself for shouldering the responsibilities of the family. The male and female child both learn the art of basketry and weaving respectively in their father's house. The Mother's main duty is to raise children and look after the home. She organises and prepares cloths for family consumption on her loinsloom. She prepares meals for the family, brings firewood from the jungles and participates in agriculture work also. Properties are distributed in equal shares among the families. Traditionally the first education of the Hmar child revolves round the house. He observes, participates and promotes the family practices. He learns to use the tools and implements needed for the building of a house, and gains all skills in the handling of the tools before he attains marriageable age.

The general rule of inheritance is for the youngest son to inherit all properties. This is because the elder son after his marriage and procurement of children leaves his father's home and starts his own house with the help of his father so he is supposed to establish his family. Since the youngest remains with his father and he may or may not be able to establish himself in the life of his father so he is given the properties of his father. The Hmar family also practice adoption. If the couples are barren they can adopt a son or daughter with the permission of the village chief after a small ceremony. In the case of death of the family head the adopted son will inherit all the property. Women are not allowed to inherit any property.

### **Kinship**

The Hmar kinship is of the Omaha type. The Hmar use their own dialect for conversation among themselves as well as with other Kuki groups of tribes of Manipur. According to the Hmar tradition a member is free to choose his marital partner from his own clan or tribe as



well as from other clan or tribe. But the incidence of preferential marriage is not as rare as reflected by some of their kinship terminology (Mother-Brother-Daughter).

Hmars are divided into 24 clans and many subclans. In marriage he is not restricted to any particular clan or family. One can marry almost any woman except one's own sister, mother, aunt or grandmother.

The two types of kinship terms i.e. the terms of address and the terms of reference do not reflect much distinction. Both sexes use the same term of reference for a particular kin. But a marked feature may be noted in case of age and sex difference between an ego and alter. The elders are not addressed by name only but a prefix 'U' is used with a part of full name of the individual. For example, a person addresses another who is older but in the same generation as U-Fahim. Here Fahim is name of the elder person and 'U' is used as prefix to pay regard. Man and wife may be referred or addressed by each other teknonymously. Through extension a mother or a father may likewise referred to teknonymously even by other persons. Most recent among the spouses of younger generation to call each other by name or at the most the wife may combine her husband's name with the prefix 'U'.

The Hmar kinship terminology is a type of classificatory system of reckoning relatives. The same terms become descriptive while in reference. The term is self-explanatory and may also be combined for denoting some other categories. Some terms are given below to indicate its components and linguistic expression.

#### PA

PA stands for fa, fa br, mo si hu, wi fa br and all male persons except mo br and fa si hu. The wife will invariably follow the terms as her husband. On the other hand the husband is not socially bound to address his affinal kins

exactly by the same term as used by his wife. In certain cases he may call his wife's father prefixing PA with the name. Father's elder brother is called by PAPUI while the younger brother may be addressed as PATE or PATE in conjunction with a part of the name. The same principle will follow for other relatives e.g. Laldena is the name which may be joined to the prefix PA with full or part of the name as PA-Laldena or PA-Lal. PAPUI means senior father and PATE means junior father. On the event of the death of a man and his wife, the children left behind are to taken care of by the elder brother of the deceased man.

## NU

NU is mother, which includes fa br wi, mo si, wi mo, si mo si and all female members except the father's clan in the same generation. A kin may be addressed as NU in conjunction with the full name or part thereof. In case one's own mother or husband's mother NU is the only term used. It is always courteous to address the wife's mother as NU (and also father as PA) and avoid joining the name either in part or in full. The term gets modified in case of a fa el br wi and is indicated as NUPUI (senior mother). They call their fa yo br wi as NUTE (small or junior mother). Mother's brother's daughter is addressed as NUTE, classifying her with one's own mother's sister. It may be due to the recent change that these days when some people address her by name or by prefixing 'U' with the name depending on the prefixing 'U' with the name depending on the seniority or juniority of addressee in age. It deserves a special mention in this context that the daughter of the mother's brother is the preferred mate not only in Hmar tribe but almost among all the Kuki groups in Churachandpur area of Manipur. In such cross-cousin marriages the wife does not address her husband's mother as NU but NI, and RANG is the usual term for father.

## NI

NI stands for father's sister. The same rule is followed for addressing the father's elder and younger sister's



NIPUI and NITE respectively. All other female members of his or her father's clan are NI combined to a part full name. The husband of all those women whom the ego calls NI are referred to or addressed as RANG by virtue of marriage.

### **PU and PI**

The term PU covers different categories of relations even by overriding the principle of generations. Those are fa fa, fa fa fa, mo fa, mo br, mo br so, mo br so so and all male members of the mother's clan irrespective of generation. The wife of each of them whom he calls PU is PI. Father's, father's father and mother's father are PU and their wives PI without adding any part of the name. Rest of the persons could be noted as PU or PI combined with a part of full name of the individual.

It is worthwhile to mention that a man equates his father's father with his father's father's father on the one hand and his mother's father with his mother's brother and also mother's brother's son on the other. This equation is obviously functional and pertinently giving importance to mother's brother and his social position even if the descent is patrilineal. Mother's father (PU) is to maintain all social obligations for his daughter's children. After his death the son (mother's brother) becomes PU and assumes all the responsibilities for his sister's children which is due to them. The children call him PUPUI if he is elder to their mother and PUTE in case he is younger in age. These things show the importance of some inter-relationship between the ego and his patrilineal and matrilineal grandparents.

### **NAU**

NAU is a term of reference only used for the children which disregards the sex distinction. But when used as NAUNU or NAUPA it will be taken to indicate daughter or son. A man can use NAU for his brother's children for the reason discussed earlier.

### UNAU

UNAU means sibling. It is a compound word framed from 'U' meaning elder sibling and 'NAU' indicating the younger sibling. A person, however, regards his wife's siblings, children or his father's brother's and mother's sisters as his own siblings. But the term of address is not UNAU prefix 'U' is joined with the name or part of it, if the addressee happens to be elder. For younger the name only is sufficient.

### TARPU AND MAKPA

These two terms of reference could be placed as wife's family vis-a-vis husband's family. The family of a man's wife is TARPU to him and the family of a woman's husband is MAKPA to her family members. While using as reference one may call his wife's father as TAR PU PA and mother as TAR PI NU. However, the term TARPU stands for all female members. Mother's family of orientation is termed as PUHAI. Wife's sister's husband is NULAM to a man. This term may be simplified like, 'NU' or 'NUHMEI' means wife and LAM is route. Thus it is understood that it should follow the same route in searching a wife.

### TU

It is the reciprocal of the term PU. That is the sister's children, father's sister's children and son's or daughter's children are referred to as TU. TU is not indicative of sex of the person concerned. Only by describing as TUPA or TUNU, a male or female may be differentiated.

### PAHNAM

It is the native term for a clear cut division of the tribe into a clan-like group. Various customs and rituals related to a PAHNAM are the responsibility of the male members only. There are a number of lineages under each PAHNAM or clan. A clan among the Hmar and most of the local tribes is not the exogamic unit. FARNU is another classificatory term which refers to all the female members of one's own

clan or PAHNAM and also the same term is used for sister. The husband of a FARNU will be known as MAKPA.

### **LAI BUNG**

When two or more PAHNAMs come to an alliance. It was found that Khawbung and Hmar Lusei clans have become allied and the members regard LAIBUNG to each other. This allied group of LAIBUNG appears as a single clan in all matters of social obligations and customary habits.

On the basis of the fact enumerated above the following conclusions can be drawn :

Universally followed rules of kinship systems as observed by Sol Tax is also applicable in Hmar kinship except the rules of equivalence. Clear cut difference is noted between cross-cousin and parallel cousins. The kinship terms sometimes disregard the principle of generation. Some elements of matrilineality in a rudimentary form may be traced from their social organisation even to-day, though the community is patrilineal. The clan (PAHNAM) organisation do not forbid clan (PAHNAM) endogamy, even if the members of the community are conscious of the rules of endogamy and exogamy.



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