

KhankhoNunkho :Customary kinship obligations among the Thadou -Kuki Tribe of Manipur

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Abstract:

The Thadou Kuki Tribe of Manipur have special obligations associated with the vast network of kinship web phrased locally as **KhankhoNunkho** which mould their social structure through generations and has been exposed to various external factors of change through different time periods as known from the previous research. This paper thus attempts to understand the kinship obligations which were culturally predetermined and developed a strong bond amongst the people and its evolution with time. Using ethnography and in depth interview, we are able to understand that this group of population has retain the core values of kinship obligations through different factors of social change and also approve it to be inherited through their successive generations.

Keywords: Thadou kuki, kinship obligations, ethnography, Manipur.

Introduction:

Obligation is something by which a person is bound to do certain things and which arises out of a sense of duty or results from customary law, Thus by kinship obligations , here we are denoting those obligations which are kinship bound and govern by traditional practices. In this contemporary age there is little use or treating these social obligations as merely part of the socio economic order Daniel Lyons (2003) however kinship obligations are heart and soul of many tribal populations and is the very essence of their existence whose daily life is occupied by the numerous obligations. Traditionally the kinship between different family members is intertwined in a set of obligations which make the kinship bond stronger. It was this Greater Kinship circle and not the household alone, which constituted the importance of kinship in the Thadou Kuki tribe of Manipur. Kin members would expect each other to conform to a relatively wide range of kinship obligations. The term obligation are the term for duty, tributes and the nature of reciprocity which plays an important role because the manifestation of the obligations includes the type of reciprocate relations and exchange by the kinsman. In the work of a Marshall Shahlins (1972), he talks about the connection between the reciprocity and family relationship. Shahlins considers giving to near kin & loved ones or not based on any definite expectations of returns and called it generalized reciprocity Gouldner(1960) consider the norms of reciprocity as a mechanism to start social relationship. His study brings out the asymmetrical nature of exchange relationship where one party giving much while the other sparsely reciprocated. It pre supposes that kinship is the social central social institution that governs all others and this works well in some traditional cultures.

Family sociology began with the assertion that urbanization and industrialization weakened extended kin ties and obligations , a position that was reinforced by the modernist theorist of the 1950s and 60s Goode (1963) .From the perspective of history all the changes effecting kinship belongs to a general face of evolution of western societies which are capitalist and privilege the individual and democratic and reflecting principle despotic forms of public and private authority to this traits are added others coming from the Christian tradition (Robert H Barnes).

The Thadou- kukiTribe of Manipur today are Christians and no doubt Christianity has come with the trends of modernization of the western societies however this society has customs and obligations which is an effective tradition in projecting cultural and political empowerment and to just state the changes without systematic research will not provide the knowledge of how when and where or if any changes and whether the strong kinship types were increasing or shrinking needs a proper analysis we have to understand the traditional system of kinship obligation and only then we can study and judge its evolution and dynamics. Andry Plakans had similarly regretted the lack of progress in identifying historical kinship and the social roles rise privilege associated with them. Lorins stone for example argues that kinship ties were eroding during the 16th and the 17th centuries weakened by the pressure of church state and market economy. In stone's view and attitudinal change took place at the threshold of the modern era in which the critical change was as weakening the bonds of kinship began to decline , became sub-ordinate, attenuated receded and increasingly limited. But does this manifest in the Kuki Society in the question, thus this research paper attempts to study the traditional ThadouKuki kinship obligation and interaction patterns and the reciprocal relation between kins.

The Thadou-Kukispeaking population is the most numerous branches of the tribes of the Kukis. They are the single largest tribe of Manipur with a total population of 215913 Census (2011). They are very scattered and located dispersal all over the North East India is found inhabited in all the hills district of Manipur and in the valley. The Thadou Kuki community is known for its institution of Chieftainship, where Haosa (village Chief) is the head of the clan or village and is interwoven in kinship relation and obligation thus it is a very powerful institution for the purpose of village administration. It is the highest and dependent political unit and is hereditary i.e in matter of succession to the chief; the rule of primogeniture is followed and is autocratic in nature. A ThadouKuki chief may as well may not so much involve in the religio-administration directly in the traditional community, as stated by Dr. T S Gangte, yet the socio political very much depend on the chief and this factor in turns are link by a network of kin who are part of the village and reciprocal relationship is rather influential in the village setup although religion* Christianity) is rarely included in the study on the kinship analysis is not

farfetched to assume that religious beliefs or Christian ideology have an impact on the attitude towards the obligation between individuals and between groups. Christianity among the ThadouKuki tribes can be traced back to an Anglican named William Pettigrew who worked in Manipur as a missionary from 1894. In the study made by the Biman Kumar Das Gupta on the purum/ Chothe of Manipur, after their conversion to Christianity, many ritual along with different specialist of the ceremonies got defunct except one which holds their tradition. In analyzing the regional kinship systems in India, Irravatikarve(and others) comes to the point that scholars should pay attention not only to the kinship terminologies and to the way the people speak about their kinship relations and the moral obligations that stem from them but also to the data of ritual practices, gift exchanges, folklore and other forms of cultural communications to understand the web of kinship.

The ethnographic literature provides a huge back up on the accounts of the Normative kinship obligations which includes the study of the customary obligations. For this particular study the researcher has focus on the ethnographic account of the obligations which deals with the blood relations and importance in the affinal kin obligations especially when two different families are link together to form kinship ties through marriage since marriage is a very important institution to study kinship, and a another important institution of the Thadou Kukis called the chieftainship is discuss in detail because it is through institution the socio political set up of this tribes are based and a village is still practically lead by a chief and this is not only is a village administration but many customary obligations are also link through this institution.

Interviews were also conducted with prominent individuals of different villages to compare the ethnographic data and the contemporary situations in the observation of the customary obligations. Some written records also came in handy while learning the different kinds of obligations which exist between two individuals in the kinship circle and through personal interviews we could sort out the kind of obligations which has been carried out from generations and till date and regardless of the many different kinds of biography written in the life of a person we can know what kinds of obligations he or she has to fulfill all throughout his life as a member of his tribe , clan or kins which are describe under the heading of obligations within kins.

The field work was conducted among the Thadou Kuki population of Kangpokpi district during the period June 2017 to October 2017 and in Chandel District during Jan- March 2018 and among the Residents of Imphal in between 2015-2016. This paper will analyze the nature and pattern of obligations between different kins and the nature of exchange resulting to it. We also observe the exchanges and reciprocity between individuals which results out of obligations as an individual and as member of different kinship based group. Therefore, Today, when the Kuki society has shifted from the hunting and gathering society to sedentary type of livelihood and of course in the change of religion to Christianity, how has this obligation being practice and most importantly which type of obligations has sustained till today to keep the kinship bond stronger.

Obligations of Miupa (eldest male among the siblings or eldest male member in a descent group):

Being eldest in the family is like having a crown of glory and honor for this society. On the other hand he is born to tackle and bear all kinds of hardships in the family. He is the person on whom all the family members including parents and younger brothers and sisters rely upon and being an heir to the parents of inheritance in any form.

Parents in the family are to reside with him and he has to perform the last funeral rite and bury them. When any of his siblings are in trouble or cause trouble he has to look in the matter and deal accordingly. On younger brother's marriage, he has to donate the main bride price that is Selpi (Mithun) whether he may be well off or not.

While the younger brothers are supposed to move out of the house in different house after marriage, the eldest brother and his wife will arrange whatever required for the brother's family and moved them out to their new home. He also has to select the Tucha and becha for him. They had to do all this in knowledge of the chief and his councils, since one house is added to the village and they had to start paying tax or get any benefit from thereon.

Miupa has to receive the main bride price whether in cash or kind which usually comprise of some amount and one Mithun of the eldest daughter of his younger brothers. While also having

the obligations to donate the animal (mostly pig) which is to be killed on the send off ceremony of the eldest daughters of his younger brothers.

For his own sisters, if his parents are still alive he has to assist them in their education or other expenses unless they are independent financially however in matters of marriage and arrangement of bridegroom he has an active role to play .he has to finalized a suitable suitor for his sisters along with his parents and send them off happily along with their required bridewealth. And do all the customary killings for the married sister's . The role and obligation of the eldest one being so important that in olden days there was many saying highlighting the essence of eldest brother and are compared to the parents in their absence. For younger brother who go against the will of the elder brother, it has been said that they will be cursed in one way or the other.

OBLIGATIONS BETWEEN PUTE AND TUTE

Pute (signifying one's matrilineal side and **Tute** (specifically one's sister's sons and daughters, one's daughter's children and grandchildren).

On the occasion in the house of a person the role of the Tute is very important. The foremost things they will do is take rice beer or a pot of tea, and give it to the Pute as an obligation and showing respect of their relationship.In case of the death of a person in the house it is obligatory for the tute to cover the deceased with a traditional shawl. The male Tute or Tupa must take part in the digging of the gravealong with other people. The women folkstook charge of the rice beer, tea and water in the funeral.Whether a person is tired or not one must take active part and get all the work done. On any special occasion in the house such as marriage, blessing ceremony, the married daughters of the house along with their husbands and children or even grandchildren will take part in the event especially in organising the feast. The male members will take care of the animal such as Mithun or cow or pig. They took charge of butchering and cooking the meat for the whole people present for such occasion.

From olden days the women folk will take care of the rest such as pouring and distributing rice beer or tea and make sure that every thirst is quenched.When we take a closer look the

role and obligation of the persons remains the same till today while the nature of items use may differ from family to family. This shows the strong network ties of kinship still strong among the ThadouKuki speaking population of Manipur. It is said the obligations is so strong that it is not necessary to get invitation to do the following work .It is Inherent in their kinship ties. On such occasions even to the mere cleaning of pots where the meat was being cooked for the occasion is done by the Tute. In olden days when houses were built the Tute of the family took charge of making the hearth or fireplace in the kitchen and also the hanging platform of Bamboo or wood meant for desiccation and drying of meat/paddy etc. a Tute regardless of his position in the society is not free from his obligations and stoop humble in the eyes of their Pute. His position in the society does not abstained him from fulfilling his duties and obligations. For instance as already describe above when a person doesn't know how to cook or butchered an animal or may be not well acquainted with the kind of work for the Tute on special occasions it is not like he/she has to be perfect rather what matters is the gesture or his effort in fulfilling them. The Pute also acknowledges the effort while little attention being given to the outcome. A person who is always in good terms with his Pute is considered a wise man and always talked about in the village and community because in the Thadou community a person who stoop low and humble in the eyes of the Pute is not look down upon by others but they are always praised. In cases when they are in bad terms with the Pute the Tute have to reactify their mistakes by taking a mithun or a pig etc in the house of the Pute and ask for pardon.

The obligations of the Pute towards their Tute is no different to the obligations of the vice versa. On special ceremony or or occasion such as marriage, child Christening , house warming or any kind of ceremony of victory known locally as "chonzouna". Or be it on a sad demise of the member of the house hold, the Pute has to give an give an animal or a cock /hen to the house of the Tute to show his support and close kinship ties. They participated in the whole programme to show their support. In small occasions some take dry fish or even dried meat to the house of the Tute. The Pute will not Partake in the feast or at times when the animals a killed in the Tute'shouse . They do partake in a little bit distance from the Tute house. This doesn't mean they hate them or avoid the them but there is a belief that if the pute eats in the

house of the tute they would consume everything they had and be reduce to poverty. So prior to Christianity they would eat /dine only in a place far away from the Tute house.

The Importance of Pute for theTute has been discussed by many people and many people highly think of their Putes. Since Pute are of their maternal residence or ones very own mother's blood, the love for them never fade. There is a belief that those families in which the Pute are not pleased are not healthy and those families who were cursed by the Pute will never ever have a prosperous future. It is an obligation for the Pute to make a feast and a blessing prayer. Till today every child is taken to their Putes home to be blessed. The Pute will have to kill an animal and prayed for them to the almighty. They even buy lots of gifts for them. Many people practice this custom besides their obligation of taking the child to the church for blessing by the priest. This goes side by side and with the the child being taken for the ceremonial feast in the house of the pute. In such situations of conflict, in the relationship or when the Pute has made any mistake. It is their duty to called the tute and hold a gathering and asked for their pardon.

The obligations of Becha and Tucha:

This institution is very unique and is prevalent among the Thadous. The reason behind the setting up of this institution is that no person or family is perfect in all ways and there are ups and downs in the family where one needs support morally and in various ways and one needs support in the decision making of the family. The Bepa (the man of the house who is bound in this kinship called becha considered for) is considered as a member of the family and he and all his family are considered family member. He represents the family in which he is bound in this fictive relationship called Bepa. This type of kinship relation is not necessarily based on blood relationship. They may be a very close friend or a distant kin and should be very much close and have understanding with the family. It is the decision of a family to choose the criteria for choosing a family as bête or a person as Bepa. The role and obligation of a Bepa is very much applaud and is very important since he acts in place of the family wherever necessary or when he represents the voice of the family in which he is the Bepa. His responsibility doesn't change no matter what type of programme the family has, whether big or small. He looks after

all the requirements of the family. As for instance in marriage arrangements, from the initial stage of going and asking for the hand of the bride is lead and done by the Bepa or on the day when a child is taken to the house of the Pute for their blessings or any programme of a family of any sort, the Bepa should be available under any circumstances and it is the obligation of a Bepa to cover all the loopholes and gap for the family. He is the person to sort out and help the family in finding solutions to problems. He can have different types of contributions at different situations when it demands. At times when a family organised a programme, the Bepa took charge of collecting and returning all the Items necessary, such as pots and utensils. He makes sure that all the items are return to its place. It is his duty to see off all the important relatives of the family when the programme concludes. In short it is the obligation of a Bepa to stand for the family at all times even in times of trouble or conflict of any kind which would harm the reputation of the family.

Unlike the chosing or courting of becha, the process or means of procuring the tucha does not have many options or choice. One cannot simply take any one or create this extended relationship. A person can procure as many as tucha he requires. A person or ego has to choose from his sisters children, from his daughters children or if doesn't have one of this in the village or nearby village he can ask his bepu/ bepa's daughters to be one of his tucha or he can take the children of a person who has similar name with his own. or even if none of them is unavailable in the village he can make his own daughters as the Tucha in the family in rare cases. When the person had some animal killed during the hunting game or when he has some sort of customary programme in his house and killed an animal such as pig for any occasion, this group of Tucha's has to do the cooking duty. They are rather known by the "group incharge of cleaning and cooking the pig's intestine". Generally people have two types of Tu one which is the main tucha is called Tubul while the othe is called Tulham. For tubul a person cannot choose from his own sibling sisters while he has the option of using them as tulham on rare occasion. generally people choose a person from a distant kin of his clan. Thetute/ Tuchas are given the hip part of the animal in exchange for their service and as customary obligation by the pute.

In olden times, when an ego or one among his relatives die, it is this group of people who are incharge of digging the burial ground for the deceased. Once a person is a tucha for the particular family, he/she has to do the type of work mainly the menial work or the type which mostly people don't feel like doing it. He has to put a lot of effort and his heart and soul into the work. However the work assigned is gender specific such as the male tuchas will have to kill and cook the meat while the female tuchas will carry and accumulate the water require for the work during the occasion. They will also cook the rice and prepare the rice beer drinks for the people gather.

Here the term Becha/ bepa or the practical use of it is usually gender specific ie for male member of the family, a female hardly represents this relationship in the circle of kinship or on any occasion but the tucha can be represented by the male or female according to the nature of occasion. And the female being almost in equal representation as the male counterpart in this relationship.

Among the Thadous of Kuki society, the relationship of a person with his Tucha and becha is a jural one that may be defined in terms of rights and obligation and privileges yet not necessarily of blood ties. It allows the familiarity among the people of two different families. Their obligation lies in assisting the other family or the family in which he hold such a prestigious title among these people in times of crisis, participate in ceremonies and serve as a mediator in disputes and ceremonial exchange during any customary practice such as marriage.

Sunggaoloi:

This is a kind of ritual and obligation for the pute,s only. The term pute refers to ones matrilineal side of the family. Whether be it the clan of one's mother or the direct or primary kin such as siblings or mother and father. However the term pute specifically is usually refer to the male groups of the matrilineal side though it is used to denote one's entire matrilineal group in general term. It may be noted that in the vicious kinship circle so many strong bonds are formed between different levels and groups but the relationship between pute and Tute is indeed strong in kuki society. It is rather said to be unique and different in various aspects to

the extend that the pute usually skip even eating and drinking at the house of the tute. It is said that in olden days especially eating of cucumber and pumkin was forbidden. In many cases where the putes where invited on various occasion to take part and if it was unavoidable of inevitable to partake the feast, the pute usually eat outside the house or at the sitting area outside the traditional house (kempum) , this was done to out of love for the tutes and for their wellbeing especially good health.

Pute sunngaoloi is the term used when the pute goes to visit a newly constructed house of a person. It is a day of happiness for the putes and tutes. For this occasion, one of the pute will go and inform that on one specific day the putes will visit them so that the person will actually gather his tuchas and bechas and they will get themselves ready by preparing two jar of rice beer.on the occasion of Sunggaoloi , all the people who came as the pute of the person will have to bring a cock or a hen. The two pots of rice beer organised by the tute one has to be pour and asked to seep by the tute. some of the cock or the hen carried by the put has to be kept for the person to rear while the rest are killed and cooked and feast upon by all the people. This is how the people in the past fulfilled their obligations in different ways and lived peacefully together with one another.

Customary obligation of taking the a child to his maternal residence /maternal kins for their blessing:

The customary obligation of taking a child or a baby to their maternal kins especially the grandfather for his blessing is termed Naopui. It is a very important and inevitable custom of the Kuki society. It is belief that a child who has not been customarily taken to his maternal residence for the kins blessings is not healthy , so the people make whether rich or poor make it a point to take the child as early stage as possible, where the maternal grandfather give his blessing by killing a pig for him or her and called on the village priestwho will pray for the child's well being. This has a term called "Lhalho".In case if the child took to different person's name by choice even then they can also take the child in the same manner to that person's house again after they are brought to the maternal kins. On this day while the child is being taken , the ears of the babies are usually pierced as a mark of good tidings. The preparation and process of

“Naopui” can be tedious as described below. A child can be taken to his /her maternal’s residence.

The customary obligation of giving different parts of the animal slaughtered on different occasion/ the hunted animals:

To whom is it obligated to give the following part of the animal and by whom:

Sa- Ngong (neck part): This part is given to a person’s matrilineal residence/ to one’s mother family), they are called Pute. When animals are being killed by a person on customary occasions or by hunting game, the neck part is given his maternal residence or family of one’s mother.(it is important to note that the obligations mentioned is of the male member of the house since or is patrilineal society). On rare occasion when the animals are being butchered on the death or demise of woman in the house, It is not obligatory for the family to give the Sa Ngong. When the animals are killed on the occasions for the love of the male deceased member, it is obligatory to drop the Sa-Ngong (animal’s neck)in the house of the maternal residence or Pute.

Every Pute is obligated to do something when they are bestowed with the Sa Ngong. The Pute has to give rice beer and prepare a small feast for the Tute or give them a cock/hen or give them back a kind of four footed animal in return for the Sa Ngong. They consider it as a blessing for the Tute to prosper or hunt more animals in case the Tute were hunters.It is an obligation for the Tute to necessarily drop the Sa Ngong to the house of the Pute. The Tute also reciprocate by giving back the hip/ waist part of the animal .This is a kind of reciprocal obligations.

The Kinship obligations between the Pute, and the Tute shows a very strong bond between them, in which respect is being paid to the Pute and Tute in return. This kind of bond and the corresponding obligations could not be neglected on any ground.

SATING (back area of an animal):

This part of the animal is usually given to the eldest brother or elder brother. Whether it be on any important occasion organised by a person where animal is killed or on occasion

where he performed some customary rituals or animal procure from hunting game he has to sent or give the backbone part of the animal killed to his elder brother or the eldest brother in line of descent. This is done to mark or to acknowledge that a person is elder to him.

Samal/ animal's thigh:

This part of the animal is usually given to the chief of the village. The reason to why this has started has many different tales. Today it is done to honour the chief for he has been kind enough to let him stay in the village.

Sa-om (belly area between front and hind legs of an animal) this part of the animal is obligated to be given to the Bepa. The reason for giving this is to acknowledge the bepa for his selfless service for a person and standing on his behalf on every kind of situation whether it be happiness or sadness by assisting him in manyways, which is why a person can stand at the level where everyone else is today in the society.

Sakong(animal's hip area): this is usually given to the tute of a person for their hardwork on every occasion especially which requires the manual labour such as cleaning, cooking, fetching water etc where the tute work day or night bearing all kinds of body ache. This is just a small gesture to acknowledge their sacrifice. Generally people have two types of Tu one which is the main tucha is called Tubul while the other is called Tulham. On such situation of giving this part of the animal to both this person/group, the one with the tail is being given to the main Tucha(tubul) while the other to the other group.

Sapheiphe(thigh muscle):

This is given to the family of sister in law and her husband(literally Nulam is the term for the wife's sister's husband). This is to acknowledge the Nulam who is considered to move/ set footstep alongside the person in happiness or sadness.

Traditional Obligation between a village Chief and his subjects:

In tribal societies, the relation of the chieftain to the tribe members is one of the genuine kinship and is frequently construed with paternal language. The institution of

chieftainship of the Thadous is interwoven in different traditional obligations between the Chief and the villagers.

Chief denotes a person who has captured many slaves in battles to work for him, who has amassed many weapons through victories in battles and who belongs to a powerful and well-known clan TarunGoswami(1982). Such a person becomes the village chief. To be the Chief, that is, the chief of the village, it is absolutely necessary for the person to have a village of his own. He may also bring other villages under his control if he is the head of the clan in some issues. He distributes the land of his village to the people for cultivation and for other purposes. The village chief is to protect the life of the villagers in time of battle and conflict. He is the defender of justice and serious cases like murder, theft, adultery etc are decided by him with the assistance of his SemangPachong. In day to day administration of the village of his clansmen, the clan head has no direct jurisdiction and does not usually interfere except when he is required to intervene in grave and critical situations and in such villages the functions are mostly confined to ritualistic ones. Naturally every chief is partly responsible to his clan chief for doing anything against the custom or administering the village notwithstanding the customary rules, this shows the kinship web in the chieftainship of the Thadous. In exchange for this duties and functions the chief enjoyed a number of privileges as well.

Ashok Kumar Ray (1990) had classified two basis of authority of the Thadou the subjective basis consist of the dogma of Descent, their legal rule of the descent and inheritance while the objective basis lies in the customary descent dues and tributes payable to the chief by the villagers the basis of chief authority of the Thadou lies on the community recognition, which is formally expressed through the payment of tributes to their chief. Traditional obligations were based on the ethics of obedience and being submissive to the chief in all forms of decision of the chief and his SemangPachong (village council) and however were mostly in the form of material tributes. The traditional tributes are customary and obligatory which would provide legitimacy to the chief .Every cultivator is required to contribute a basketful of paddy to the Chief after every harvest. The tax is called Changseu. It is also obligatory for any hunter to offer

to the Chief the head and the right hind-leg of any eatable animal killed by the hunter. The flesh of the head is cooked and partaken by the officials of the SemangPachong.

The Haosa or the Chief who is a good judge of men, summons a highly capable and faithful young person, LomHaosa and entrust him with the task of organizing the Lom, that is, the youth corps of the village. The Chief directs this young person to prepare the required quantity of wine before taking initial action towards formation of the *Lom*. This wine is called *Lompiju*. After preparation of the *Lompiju* the young person invites all the young unmarried persons, male and female, to his field to help him in his cultivation. This function is attended by the Chief along with the members of the *SemangPachong* or village council. The most essential function of the *LomHaosa* is to maintain the relationship between the Chief and the *Lom*. The Lom Chief has the full power to adjudge and to impose punishment on the guilty members of the Lom in all criminal and sexual offences. He has also the power to drive out a person from the Lom. The *LomHaosa* is a member of the *SemangPachong* and is entitled to have the special SemangPachong wine. In this way the chief is connected with all the villagers in different network of *Tucha*, *Becha* and His Councils who were in charge of the different administration of the villages.

From the traditional and customary obligations between the chief and the villagers of the ThadouKuki community, the complex relationship has been demystify and it is vivid that Thadou chieftainship is way more than political administrative unit of the village which underlies some principles or code of conduct which lean on a stronger kinship knot. In The Christianized Thadou society there has been considerable change the nature of obligations between the chief and the villagers. The first case is observed in the tributes paid to the chief and secondly the obligations to the chief by the villagers while considering the power and prestige of the chief. There has been a drastic reduction to the number of obligations in the case of annual or occasional tributes paid to the chief such as the *Changseu* in some villages has not become compulsory because some villages completely scraped off this nature of obligations while some villages make it compulsory for outsiders who are not a part of the villagers or whom the chief has granted permission to cultivate in his village. It is compulsory for those

people to pay something to the chief in return for the chief's permission. The fact that this has been optional while some are not is based on the interviewee's response in different Christianized Thadous living in two different districts. The importance of the prominence of Christian doctrines such as the giving of Tithe which is one tenth of the offering of the income in any form has been popularized and the setting up of church administration also requires payment in cash and kind and the people's ideology has been shifted to the Christianized concept of obligations of giving Tithe. The *Changseu* which has been given to the chief are contributed to the church. The obligation of giving the hind leg of any animal killed by the villagers to the chief while traces of the practice only in few villages if found, this tradition has become outdated in many regions for various reasons and this day many give a part of the animal to the dedicating minister/pastor of the church while killing any animal for any occasion. The reason being the importance of the role of the church pastor in the village functions and ritual and that the meat given to him is a part dedicated to the Almighty God and the pastor being considered as the servant of God has his share. However Christianity is not the sole responsible for the degrading nature of this tribute and other reasons are also there which are beyond our topic. These obligations do not clash with any Christian elements yet here it can be seen as not diminished but it has shifted its course and importance being given to the church pastors. While mentioning the power of the Chief of the Thadous, the chief having the absolute land ownership right and his decision being final in regard to building of a house or the holding of a piece of land, if the chief is not in good terms with a villager he can ask the villager to shift from his village and one may become aware of the chief's power and the necessity of a villager to be in good terms with the chief for the chief can confiscate him of his land. A villager would definitely maintain good kinship ties with the chief on these grounds even if the traditional obligations would fade away thus many will passively accept the orders of the chief on any ground without challenging his decision even when he or she wants to. The chief always seeks the help of his *SemangPachong* which comprise of mostly the experienced and wise village elders so there is little room for that type of conflict between a villager and him.

The customary tribute to the chief like that of the Selkotkai¹, Ahkai², Selgampotman³, Nungahthengkai⁴ has lost its existence. All this has not been mandatory or

compulsory in especially in cases like that of the mentioned ones above. Even in the cases of *Nungahthengkai* where the a token is paid by the groom's family has been an independent matter of the family and need not necessarily consult the chief in this matter or pay in this tribute rather in arranged / Chongmou marriage or holy matrimony in case of the Christianized Thadous, obligation of seeking permission is done to the church executives and the ceremonial organization is handover to the church administration. The Chief is approach only if the bride or Groom's family has any sort of requirement from the chief.

In regard to the creation of youth organization of the village, with the setting up of church in the Christian Thadou villages, there exist another youth department which is a part of the church administration and is not the obligation to the village Chief in its set up or functioning unlike the formation of Youth Corps of the village called *Lom* which however has a different form today, The village Youth club which is form with the knowledge of the village chief and he has a say in it but it has not become obligatory on the part of chief to actively participate in its activities like that of the past where he has a strong ties with the *Lom* through his selected *Lom Chief* who connects the chief with the *Lom* and helps to maintain it.

1 Sel means Mithun, kot means gate and Kai means tax. *Selkotkaiis* a tax imposed on the purchaser of a Mithun. The Chief allots a particular plot of land for construction of the common village enclosure for confining the Mithun. When a Mithun is sold the purchaser has to give by way of taxation a jarful of wine to the Chief right at the moment he brings out the Mithun through the gate of the enclosure.

2 Just like the pig a good big cock owned by the Chief is given to the villagers for breeding purpose. In return each villager is required to give a cock to the Chief. During British rule in lieu of the cock it became customary to charge a rupee from each villager.

The obligation to give one day labour to the chief is still practice while it may not be for the sole benefit of the chief and his family but for the benefit of the whole village in general. The settling of the civil and criminal disputes is still the duty of the chief and his *SemangPachong*. His power and privileges in this matter is not in question. In regard to land settlement, place for Jhum cultivation for the villagers, migration to his village or from his village are all the duty of the chief to look into the matter wherein all the process of obligations

using of traditional rice beer has been replaced with Tea and snacks. Even today in some villages it is the obligation of the chief towards a villager who migrated to his village to provide house materials and other providence like paddy for a specific period of time or until the new family has completed constructing their house. It is also a part or responsibility of the chief to help any villager in times of need or situations of sickness or other situations where the help of the chief is being sought. However it is not mandatory for all chief, rather it is voluntary with a sense of responsibility for the kinsmen.

The relationship between Tradition and Christianity has been a prominent theme in Anthropological writings. Thus a complex relationship between local tradition and Christianity also played important role in shaping the face of Christianity (Chang-Kwo, Tan 2003) or vice versa which can influence the degree or nature of obligation of the people as it is in the case of the Thadou Kuki population.

3 At the time of sale of a Mithun the owner of the Mithun has to give a tax to the Chief in the form of a jarful of wine. The Chief is the legal owner of the plot of land he gives for erection of the Mithun enclosure. Once the Mithuns are inside the enclosure the grass within is eaten up by the animals. Even the soil becomes unfit for any other use. By way of compensation for such damages the Chief imposes this tax. The very word *Selgampotmaan* signifies this. *Sel* means Mithun, *Gam* means land, *Pot* means barren and *Maan* means cost, In course of time a rupee becomes payable in lieu of the jar of wine.

4 Marriage tax When a marriage is performed according to the *Chongmou* and *Sahapsat* (arrange) System of marriage the bridegroom's family has to contribute a female pig to the Chief. This pig is killed, cooked and partaken by the *SemangPachong*. Ultimately, this custom of offering a female pig to the Chief has been replaced by a token offer of rupees five.

After an in depth study on the nature and type of obligations which were and are still prevalent among the Thadou Kukis of Manipur, it has been found that fewer obligations and rights can be expected to be observed towards kin and not many kinfolk have many rights with respect to the other however the ones which are still practice are the ones strongly approved by all for the fact that they are the inevitable for the existence of the unique kinship structure of this society. Chieftainship also plays an important role for the unique administration and for the kinship network within the ThadouKuki villages. From the nature of reciprocity, we can

understand that normative obligations have diminished in some case while it has change its course and form while adding the elements of Christianity. However, the people have emphasized Khankho-Nunkho as inherent part of their kinship and this traditional virtue speaks its uniqueness among others to which they make an effort and make sure their younger generations inculcate the same. Thus, kinship obligations are inevitable in the Thadou kuki society and further studies will enable us to understand the intergenerational difference in the attitude towards obligations.

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